

Saipan Tribune

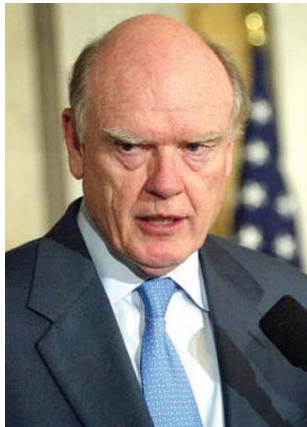
CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

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INSIDE



Business Growth

Treasury Secretary John Snow declared Tuesday "America's economy is getting stronger every day," although he said more must be done to foster long-term business growth.

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Make Peace

Former President Clinton called on China and the United States to overcome their differences on trade, saying the two powers must learn to work together to conquer common threats like AIDS, terrorism and global warming.

Page 17



Wandering Tigers

Nearly five years after a tiger found wandering the suburbs triggered a crackdown on a private sanctuary for big cats, animal welfare workers began removing 24 Bengal tigers for shipment to a Texas sanctuary.

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Tourists are coming back

MVA reports growth in October 2003 arrivals

By JOHN RAVELO
REPORTER

Visitor arrivals to the Northern Marianas last month indicated that the islands' tourism industry is beginning to regain strength following

tumultuous global events that adversely impacted the travel sector across the globe.

For the second consecutive month, the number of tourists who visited the CNMI increased in October compared to the monthly figures last year. Last month's arrival tally of 38,512 was just 0.38

percent shy of October 2000's 40,400 total—before the 9-11 tragedy pillaged economies worldwide.

The Marianas Visitors Authority reported that last month's total reflected a 6.32-percent increase compared to 36,224-arrival figure in October 2002.

The MVA anticipates tourism's

performance to improve this fiscal year, with more airline seats becoming available to ferry tourists from the CNMI's premier market—Japan.

The MVA cited Northwest Airlines' inauguration of direct flights between Saipan and Nagoya, Japan, which is the CNMI's second largest source of Japanese tourists. It also cited JALways commencement of new daily services from

See **TOURISTS** on Page 8



LIBERTY DONES

WORLD EDUCATION WEEK

Gov. Juan N. Babauta, standing fifth from right, poses with students, educators, and diplomatic officials shortly after signing a proclamation designating Nov. 17-22 as International Education Week and Cultural Day Wednesday at the NMC. Among those in photo are NMC president Kenneth Wright, standing sixth right, Board of Regents officials led by chair Kimberlyn King-Hinds, standing third right, Japanese Consul Takeo Saito, seated right, Philippine Consul-General Wilfredo Maximo, standing fourth right. Also included are NMC Associated Student president Kay Fitial, seated center, and visiting American World University Maxine Asher, seated second left, NMC vice president Chas Algaier, fifth left back, and NMC community program services and Pacific Gateway marketing director Tony Deleon Guerrero, standing right.

Babauta seeks increased military presence

By MARIAN A. MARAYA
REPORTER

Gov. Juan N. Babauta is looking to confirm if the U.S. Pacific Command has the Northern Marianas in mind amid reported plans by Pacom to close or downsize its military base in Okinawa.

The chief executive is poised to raise the subject as part of the agenda in his Nov. 24 meeting with Admiral Thomas Fargo, the Pacom commander.

"[The meeting] pertains to the potential and possible closure, if not downsizing, of the base in Okinawa. If they did that, then where would they move

the troops to? They have been kind of looking at the CNMI as a potential place for those movements, but we're not really sure. And of course, a lot of this they're planning is still confidential, not from our standpoint but for them. Until they are sure what they want to do," the governor told reporters yesterday.

Press Secretary Peter A. Callaghan confirmed that with different troop movements planned for the Pacific, the administration needs to know if the CNMI is being looked at as a possible host to a permanent military base.

"Admiral Fargo is the commanding

See **BABAUTA** on Page 8

NMC is a step closer to getting \$8M USDA loan

By LIBERTY DONES
REPORTER

The U.S. Department of Agriculture-Rural Development has approved the pre-application of Northern Marianas College for an \$8 million direct loan.

NMC president Kenneth Wright and finance director David Atalig said they just received "the good news" from the USDA headquarters on Guam.

Wright relayed the information to Gov. Juan N. Babauta during yesterday's

See **NMC** on Page 8

Funding woes snag dump closure

By JOHN RAVELO
REPORTER

Nine months after the gates of the Puerto Rico dumpsite were closed to the public, the CNMI government remains beset with funding problems to implement the facility's final closure that is compliant with U.S. Environmental Protection Agency standards.

EPA officials who are currently on-island disclosed this, admitting that the CNMI government has not met the current compliance schedule the federal agency had imposed regarding the Commonwealth's solid waste violation.

But John McCarroll and Pat Young, the EPA's Pacific Islands Office manager and CNMI program manager,

See **FUNDING** on Page 8

2003 Look Back

THE SENATE DEBACLE

The soap opera up on Capitol Hill

By JAYVEE VALLEJERA
ASSISTANT EDITOR



This was the year when Mr. Nice Guy took a backseat at the Senate. Civility, manners, and exemplary deportment went flying out the window, as senators went at each other with unsheathed claws, the simmering mélange of uneasy alliances, unmet expectations, and distrust among its members needing just a single spark to ignite the conflagration.

That single spark was provided middle of this year by the stunning convictions of two veteran lawmakers—majority bloc senators Jose Dela Cruz and Ricardo S. Atalig—on charges of defrauding the CNMI government by providing fictitious jobs to their relatives. The untimely departure of the two senators created a critical vacuum in the five-member leadership bloc and placed the four-member minority in the ascendancy, setting the stage for one of the most bizarre incidents in the history of the Commonwealth’s Legislature and nearly paralyzing the legislative process for several critical measures. But that’s getting ahead of the story.

Much like any other crisis, what happened at the Senate this year was no overnight development. It was merely the product of two years of unreconciled differences and spats between the majority and the minority bloc, all building up to its inexorable climax. Smarting from what it perceived as deliberate acts by the majority to exclude the minority bloc from the Senate loop, members of the minority—Sens. Reyes, David M. Cing, and Ramon S. Guerrero—time and

again complained that they are being intentionally kept in the dark by the majority over proposed measures or actions and that they are always being passed over during leadership meetings. Manglona and his group—Sens. Joaquin G. Adriano, Diego M. Songao, Thomas P. Villagomez, Atalig, and Dela Cruz—all denied this, saying the door is always open for the minority to come in and participate in leadership meetings. That never happened.

Then there was their sharp differences in the interpretation of the suspensions of Atalig and Dela Cruz. At that time, the two have not been convicted yet but the minority was insisting that the two should already be suspended and have, in fact, already been suspended with the adoption of appropriate resolutions. The majority differed, saying the two could only be suspended once the court finds them guilty. Before they could resolve the matter, the court found the two senators guilty.

Despite this, Atalig still insisted—with the tacit agreement of the Senate majority—that he is still a member of the upper chamber, to which the minority vociferously objected. By this time, although still officially part of the leadership, Villagomez had effectively transferred his loyalties to the minority, prompting the bloc to argue that four trumps the three remaining members of the majority. Whiffs of a power struggle and a possible leadership coup started circulating within the narrow halls of the Legislature.

Everything came to a head on Aug 27, 2003, during a regular session by the chamber. That fateful day started ominously enough, when Cing stood up to castigate the leadership and accuse it of lying when it claimed that it never received the papers of Commonwealth Utilities



Manglona Reyes

Corp. board member nominee Rufina Miles. As it later turned out, Miles was confirmed to the board. Manglona then called for a short recess and left the building, together with Songao and Adriano.

When the three failed to show up 30 minutes later, the three-member minority, together with Villagomez, reconvened the session and effectively shanghaied the leadership, claiming that, with their superior number, they are now THE majority bloc in the Senate. To seal their hold on the leadership, the four chose Reyes to be the new Senate president and met in several sessions during which they passed several critical measures, including the proposed \$213-million Fiscal Year 2004 spending plan. All this time, Manglona was angrily pointing out in the media that what the four were doing was illegal and contrary to the legal interpretation of what a majority consists of.

With the new majority ignoring him, Manglona was forced to bring the matter to court, asking the CNMI Superior Court to declare the Aug. 27 session and subsequent sessions illegal. He also asked Gov. Juan N. Babauta to freeze all Senate committee accounts, to which the governor acceded, although he said he is not doing this at the behest of Manglona.

On Nov. 18, Judge Kenneth Govendo threw out Manglona’s suit on the ground of judicial abstention, upholding the constitutional doctrine on the separation of the three branches of government. He also urged the two Senate factions to work out among themselves solutions to the issues raised before the court. Fat chance of that happening.

The decision left opposing factions with conflicting interpretations on the legal implications of judicial abstention, with the new majority claiming that the decision means their Aug. 27 actions were valid. Manglona’s camp had a different interpretation, saying the court effectively left the issues for the Senate to resolve.

Seeing that matters could not be resolved with finality unless he has the numbers to back him up, Manglona waited until the holding of the special elections on Tinian and Rota in Oct. and Nov. to find the replacements for Atalig and Dela Cruz. Once the results were in, Manglona aggressively wooed the support of the two new senators—Paterno Hocog of Rota and Joseph Mendiola of Tinian—and got them, enabling him to regain his presidency.

As part of his first official action as the resurgent Senate leader, Manglona suspended all four members of the minority during a session on Rota last Nov. 17 due to the four senators’ alleged violations of CNMI Constitution and the Official Rules of the Senate. Cing, Reyes, and Guerrero were suspended effective for one month, while Villagomez was imposed another separate suspension for 45 days for his alleged involvement in a scheme to defraud the CNMI government—the same case that jailed Atalig and Dela Cruz.

The four threatened to go to court but cooler heads, including that of Babauta, managed to prevail over Manglona, who later decided to shorten the suspensions to just 15 days.

With Manglona’s hold on the Senate leadership now firmly back in place, everything has gone back to normal at the upper chamber, which means back to the usual bickering and political maneuvering. With a lame duck Senate in place, the public cannot expect much in way of new legislation making it before January’s inauguration. So just sit back and relax and wait for the new 14th Senate, which promises to be as entertaining as this year’s batch.

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80-20 INITIATIVE

‘Understandable but unrealistic, impractical’

By JAYVEE VALLEJERA
ASSISTANT EDITOR

The 80-20 proposition is an understandable offshoot of some people’s frustration over the shenanigans at the Senate but it fails on two counts: the demands of reality and practical application.

These, in a gist, were the sentiments separately expressed by both House Speaker Heinz S. Hofschneider and Lt. Gov. Diego T. Benavente when sought for their comments on the proposed initiative that would authorize senatorial districts to retain 80 percent of their revenue within their respective districts, remitting only 20 percent to the general fund.

Hofschneider, however, said there is a distinct possibility that the initiative would go through, considering that about eight out of 10 persons he has talked with are in support of the proposition. “I think it’s all generated by the recent debacle as to the senatorial fight over appropriation,” he added.

He conceded that the 80-20 initiative would relieve a lot of the frustrations over the increasing financial burden borne by the Third Senatorial District—Saipan—for the Second and First Senatorial Districts.

Benavente, on the other

hand, expressed belief that the initiative will not work, describing it as ridiculous. “I understand the frustration but we have a Commonwealth here that we have established and to require that [80-20 initiative] for Rota and Tinian—and maybe the future of the other islands—would be ridiculous because it will not work,” he said.

Benavente pointed out that CNMI officials cannot take these kinds of actions based on their disagreement with one another. “We need to make decisions based on what’s best for the entire Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, not what’s best for any particular individual.”

He expressed hope that those behind the initiative do not mislead the people of Saipan as to the practicability of the proposal. While the proposal sounds good for the people of Saipan who are frustrated with the incidents at the Senate, he said there is a need to better educate the public as to the impact the 80-20 initiative would mean to the people of Rota and Tinian.

Hofschneider also pointed out that there are certain services mandated on the CNMI government that it must fulfill—regardless of emotions and personal opinions—paramount

of which are free and compulsory education, health care, and public safety for the general population of the Commonwealth.

By restricting the amount of money flowing into the general fund to 20 percent, Hofschneider said this could paralyze basic services not just on Tinian and Rota but also on Saipan.

“No matter how you feel about it, the Constitution mandates this government to provide this three essential services, and the central government is to provide the funding adequately,” he said.

If the proposition does go through, Hofschneider anticipates an accounting nightmare for the CNMI government. As an example, he cited the \$8-million bond payment obligations of the government. “If 80-20 goes through, do we then take 80 percent of the overall bond obligation—the annual payment—and pay only for those that had to do with the Third Senatorial District? And if Rota and Tinian does not have enough to pay for the CIP matching in the \$60-million bond, and if they are also entitled to the land compensation, do we proportionately transfer that annual payment to them and have them pay under their 80 percent of the payments?”

jollibee

arc

Random curfew checks continue

By EDITH G. ALEJANDRO
REPORTER

The Department of Public Safety raided several hotspots believed to be haven of criminal activities in light of the beefed up enforcement of curfew hours.

According to DPS spokesperson Sgt. Tom Blas, Jr., authorities are zeroing in on areas where criminal activities are frequently reported such as Garapan, Koblerville, Chalan Kanoa, and Susupe, adding that the operation will continue as long as curfew hours are in effect.

“We will continue our operations against curfew violators as long as curfew hours are in effect. We will randomly check on areas with high incidents of crimes and the operations will be done simultaneously,” he explained.

Blas warned parents and guardians of minors to keep track of their children since appropriate charges would also be slapped against them. “We would like to inform the parents and guardians of minors to be aware of the curfew hours. If these kids are still loitering during the curfew hours, they would be arrested,” he stressed.

The DPS said that minors who are 15 and under should not be out on the street between 9pm and 5am Mondays through Thursdays, and from 10pm to 5am Fridays through Sundays.

For minors 16 years old and above, curfew hours are from 10pm to 5am Mondays through Thursdays, and from 11pm to 5am Fridays through Sundays. During these times, minors should not be seen loitering outside.

Anti-littering signs installed

By JOHN RAVELO
REPORTER

The Coastal Resources Management Office has installed close to 50 beach signs on Saipan, Tinian and Rota as part of the campaign against illegal dumping.

Benny Pangelinan, coastal resources coordinator at the CRMO, said the project was made possible through a \$26,140-grant from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Pangelinan said the project is a message about the government’s stance on environmental protection. The signs are installed on Saipan’s popular beaches.

“A clean environment is one of the CNMI’s major attractions—it brings in more tourists and, at the same time, helps deter crime,” he said. “The CRMO is continuing [its] public education program to inform the people of [its] vital role in ensuring that our islands remain beautiful and clean through these newly imple-

During an operation conducted over the weekend, authorities arrested at least 15 minors for curfew violations. The operations were made in response to complaints of increasing criminal activities involving juveniles.

Members of the DPS Criminal Investigation Bureau, Thief Apprehension Select Coalition and Juvenile Unit surveyed several areas in Chalan Kanoa, Garapan, Susupe, and Koblerville, during which several minors were picked up due to various offenses that include court orders and curfew violations, as well as possession of tobacco and alcoholic beverages.

“The presence of these youngsters out on the street increased, resulting in the rising number of crimes involving minors. The operations were launched to help curb crimes committed by juveniles,” Blas said.

He noted that the operations were also intended to educate youngsters on the curfew law, as well as deter the youths’ involvement in illegal activities. “Many youngsters have been seen late in the night loitering around establishments and villages.”

Blas cited the need to intensify the information campaign on the existence of the curfew law, adding that a great number of minors are not aware that such a law exists.

In light of the ongoing crackdown against curfew violators, the DPS warned parents, legal guardians, sponsors and any adult in custody of a minor, especially those with conditions from the court, to be extra aware of the curfew hours.

mented signs designed to stop littering in our beaches.”

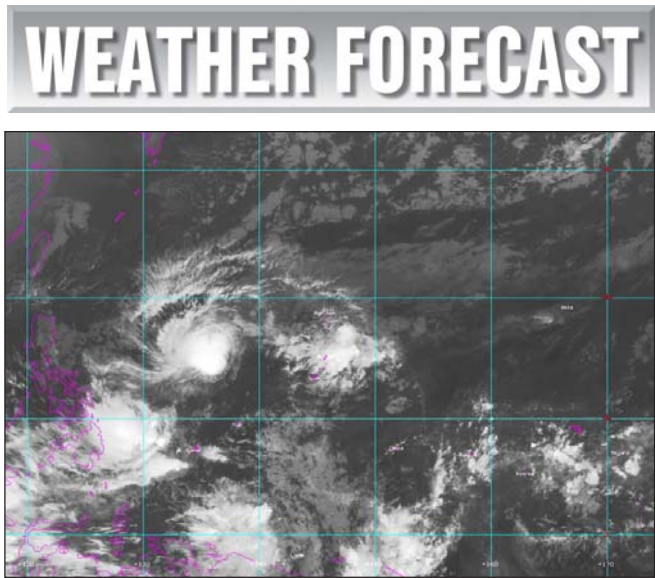
Pangelinan said 31 signs are up on Saipan. Seven signs have been put up on Tinian, while eight others stand on Rota.

The signs advise the public to dispose of its trash in the trash bins. The message has translations in several languages, including Chamorro, Carolinian, Filipino, Japanese, Korean and Chinese.

On Saipan, the CRMO installed the signs at the following beach sites: Kilili, Micro, San Jose, Susupe, Coral Ocean Point, Paupau, among others.

“We’d like you to keep in mind that dirty areas repel tourists and encourage criminal activity. So please, put your litter where they belong—in the trash cans,” the CRMO said.

Earlier, the Division of Environmental Quality also disclosed putting up beach signs. These, however, inform the public of the marine water quality of the beach sites where they stand.



PICTURE TIME: 1:00 A.M., DECEMBER 23, 2003
Western North Pacific between Equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

A monsoon trough extends from 5N130E to a weak circulation near 5N135E then ends near 10N139E. Strong low-level convergence along the trough is producing scattered showers and isolated thunderstorms northwest of Palau and Yap in an area bounded by 18N130E to 19N140E to 14N140E to 6N134E to 5N130E then back to 17N130E...and across the Mariana Islands and Chuuk between the equator and 18N from 140E to 154E. Further east...trade-wind convergence is producing scattered showers north of Kosrae between 5N and 9N from 161E to 164E...and across southern half of the Marshall Islands between the equator and 10N from 166E to 180. Low clouds are found about 300 miles north and northwest of a dissipating shear line from 25N180E to 19N145E.



SAIPAN AND TINIAN
Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.
Winds: East at 15-20 mph. Highs near 80. Lows near 70.



GUAM AND ROTA
Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.
Winds: East at 20 mph. Highs near 80. Lows near 70.



PALAU
Partly cloudy with scattered showers.
Winds: Southeast at 10 kt.



POHNPEI
Mostly cloudy with scattered showers.
Winds: East at 10 kt.



YAP AND ULITHI
Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.
Winds: East at 10 kt.



KOSRAE
Mostly cloudy with scattered showers.
Winds: Northeast at 10 kt. or less



CHUUK
Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.
Winds: Northeast at 10 kt.



MAJURO
Mostly cloudy with scattered showers.
Winds: Northeast at 15 kt.

	CITY	FORECAST	HIGH	LOW
	Auckland	Partly Cloudy	71F (22C)	53F (12C)
	Beijing	Sunny	49F (9C)	23F (-5C)
	Hong Kong	Partly Cloudy	75F (24C)	64F (18C)
	Honolulu	Sunny	83F (28C)	71F (22C)
	London, England	Cloudy	52F (11C)	41F (5C)
	Los Angeles	Partly Cloudy	64F (18C)	49F (9C)
	Manila	Partly Cloudy	85F (29C)	71F (22C)
	Melbourne	Sunny	76F (24C)	59F (15C)
	Miami	Partly Cloudy	77F (25C)	66F (19C)
	New York City	Partly Cloudy	44F (7C)	32F (0C)
	Osaka	Partly Cloudy	52F (11C)	36F (2C)
	Paris	Cloudy	46F (8C)	36F (2C)
	Pusan	Sunny	59F (15C)	43F (6C)
	Rome	Sunny	44F (7C)	32F (2C)
	Salem, Oregon	Partly Cloudy	46F (8C)	34F (1c)
	San Francisco	Rain	56F (13C)	44F (7C)
	Seoul	Partly Cloudy	48F (9C)	32F (0C)
	Tokyo, Japan	Partly Cloudy	54F (12C)	43F (6C)
	Washington, DC	Partly Cloudy	44F (7C)	28F (-2C)

Bomb detonation closes Marpi on Friday

By **JOHN RAVELO**
REPORTER

The Marpi area will be closed to traffic and the general public on Friday, when the U.S. Navy and the Emergency Management Office detonate over 1,000 pounds of World War II ordnance.

In a public advisory, the EMO said the closure of the Marpi area would be from 8am to 4pm. The scheduled detonation begins by 10am.

“The only area that will not be closed off will be Suicide Cliff as that will be the main viewing point for the detonation. The public’s access to Suicide Cliff will be allowed only at the road leading up to the Far East Broadcasting antenna into Suicide Cliff for viewing purposes,” the EMO said.

The Department of Public Safety would set up security posts at the area to control traffic movement, the EMO said.

The EMO had also scheduled detonation activities on both Friday and Saturday, but Director Rudolfo Pua said the second day of the activity would most likely be a mopping-up operation.

Pua disclosed that over 1,000 lbs. of assorted ordnance would be detonated Friday, including projectiles, mortars, grenades and blasting caps. The EMO will also dispose of fireworks that have been stored at the agency’s bunker in Marpi.

The Navy’s Explosive Ordnance Disposal team from Guam already arrived on-island, meeting with EMO staff yesterday. All is set for the

activity, but Pua had said the Navy would decide if the schedule would be cancelled should it rain on Friday.

Designated as detonation site is the Laderan Laggun Cliffline located south of the Marpi landfill. “The grid coor-

dinates are 15 degrees 16.11 minutes North and 145 degrees 49.26 minutes East and 5,000 feet above sea level.”

The EMO warned the public—including tour operators, commercial pilots and fishermen—to stay at least one mile away from the site when the detonation activities are ongoing.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency had issued

the EMO an emergency permit pursuant to the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act to allow the detonation and open burning of the ordnance, saying that the wastes pose an imminent threat to human health and the environment.

Foul play ruled out in worker’s death

Authorities ruled out foul play as the cause of death of a nonresident worker who was discovered dead inside his workplace in Garapan two weeks ago, police disclosed yesterday.

PO3 Tom Blas Jr., Department of Public Safety spokesperson, said that Dr. Aurelio Espinola conducted an autopsy on the body of Fang Yue-Sheng who was found dead in front of his computer inside the Linson Garment building last Oct. 31.

Yue-Sheng was found injured around 12am of Oct. 31 and was immediately brought to the Commonwealth Health Center where he was pronounced dead on arrival.

According to the autopsy report released by Espinola, Yue-Sheng suffered from ruptured splenic aneurisms in his pancreas area.

The autopsy was conducted to shed light on the circumstances surrounding Yue-Sheng’s death. He was at his jobsite when the incident happened.

According to the report, he was noticed slumped in front of his computer and his co-workers tried to revive him but had little response. (*Edith G Alejandro*)

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+red

Opinion

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EDITORIAL

I heard you. I think.

Although you'd never know it listening to television or reading corporate reports, clear language remains an important means of communication. Mollycoddling the obsequious obfuscators who leverage an extensible repository of blather is a continuous threat to understanding what's really happening anywhere, regardless of critical causality.

Nowhere was this more evident than in the Enron and other corporate accounting scandals where really impressive-sounding terms were sprinkled, then poured and ultimately shoveled into corporate public statements.

Drawing on its own internal corporate synergies and creative visualizations, a team at Deloitte Consulting has invested nine months imagineering a dictionary of some 350 "bullwords," phrases and words that often indicate less an attempt to communicate ideas than an effort to obliterate them. It then developed a computer program that can be applied much like computer spell-checking systems to, say, a company's annual report.

Bullfighter, as the program is called, detects bullwords and jargon-jammed passages that are free of meaning. Users then can rate the company. Too many bullwords tips investors that there's more being hidden than revealed. They then can put their money into a more transparent enterprise.

"That's a good indicator of the linkage between clear and straight communications and business performance, including the issue of transparency and trust," said Brian Fugere, a Deloitte partner. In short, Fugere and his no-nonsense team have had it with repurposeable, value-added knowledge capital and robust, leverageable mindshares. It was truly incentivizing to expunge such talk from the entire team's bandwidth and envisioner a day when clear talk will be triumphalistic.

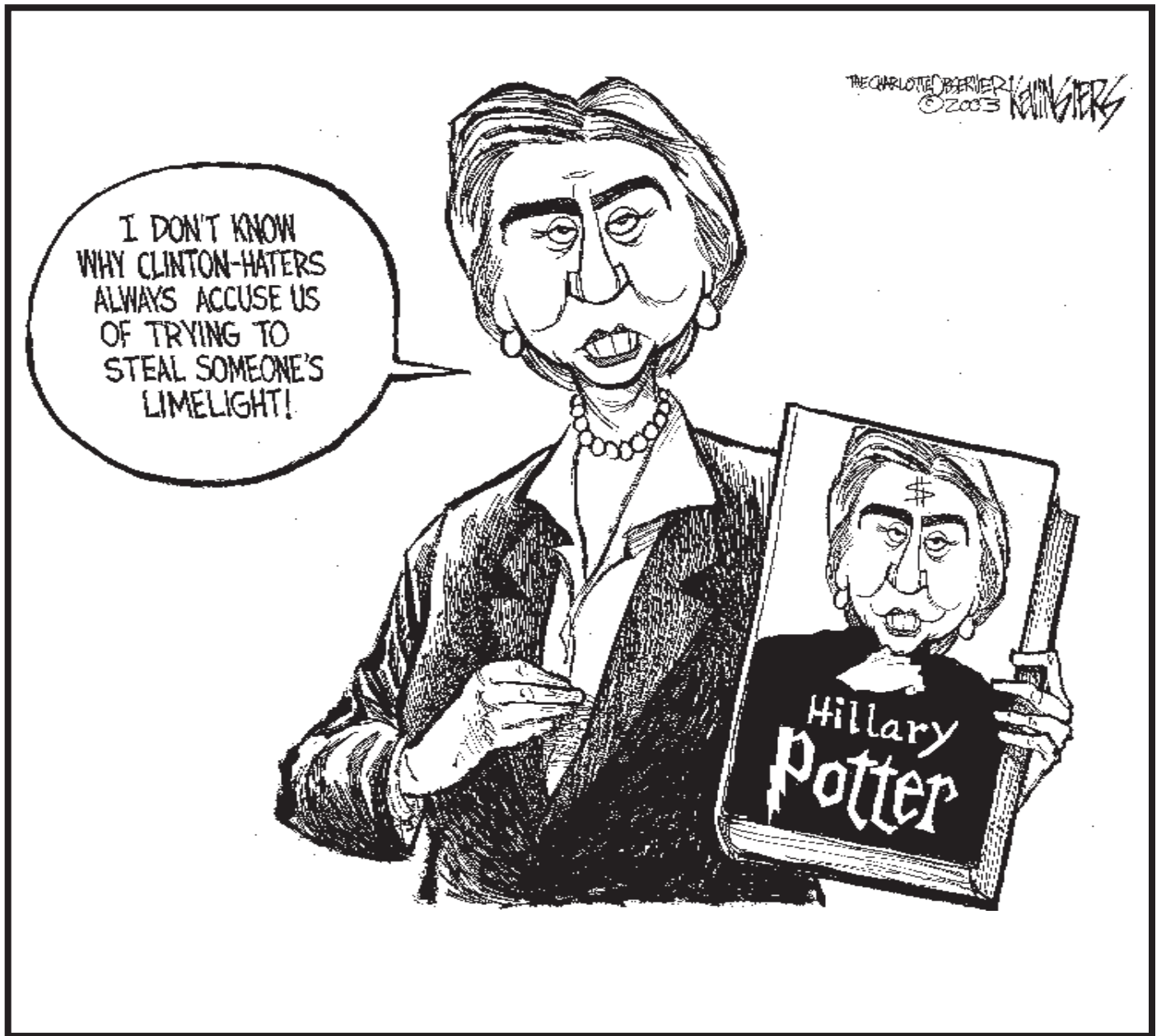
Applied to 30 gigantean companies, Deloitte found Home Depot the best on clarity, while computer hardware and software companies were the most graveolent and contraindicated. In Enron statements, Bullfighter detected arcane verbosity and verbal fog deepening with the company's troubles.

Of course, users of the program, downloadable exempt from cost at www.dc.com/bullfighter, might also apply Bullfighter to the ritual utterances of indecipherable political verbiage that seem likely in coming calendrical rotations. Rather like a consumer's guide to flatulent phrasings and ideational argumentations by disputatious and controversialistic oppositionists. And then voters could expunge the wordy perpetrator from their intended balloting patterns.

Clearly, newspapers are free of obese verbosity and every minute hold clarity and conciseness as achievable endpoints. Thanks to Bullfighter's externalization and to similar programs yet developed for other areas, the eternal struggle against wordy obtuseness may gain valuable yardage, marching down the field to the end zone of better communications.

Now, that's a new paradigm.

Los Angeles Times



Generic insights from singular folk

If you're a working journalist, it's hard not to be amused by Greg Packer, the Long Island, N.Y., highway maintenance worker who recently was revealed as the ever-present "man on the street" in scores of news stories around the country.

Packer makes a point of showing up at assorted media events and staking out a prominent spot so that he'll be noticed and interviewed by members of the media. According to a recent Wall Street Journal story, during the week that Hillary Clinton's autobiography hit the bookstores, Packer showed up at several book signings and wound up being quoted a dozen times in various newspapers, as well as being interviewed for television.

One reporter's Internet search uncovered at least 100 Packer quotes. He has been quoted on stories as diverse as the latest "Star Wars" movie, this year's St. Patrick's Day Parade and the U.S. invasion of Iraq. Packer occasionally hits the jackpot by talking to Associated Press reporters and having his remarks circulated to news organizations around the country.

His comments are bland and his insights are negligible. When waiting to see the pope at Giants Stadium in 1995, he told a Newsday reporter, "I believe it'll be inspirational and something I'll never forget." For a Newsday story about Clinton's new book, he said the senator "is a smart woman." But reporters are desperate for man-on-the-street stuff, and because Packer makes himself available he could well be the most widely quoted regular Joe in history.

He admits he craves attention, telling The New York Times he needs to be quoted because "I just need to show people I'm alive."

His sound-bite scam is a kind of one-up on us journalists. We seek out quotes from ordinary men and women to decorate our stories, give them an air of authenticity and prove that we were there.

For facts, reasoned arguments and spin, we go to politicians, lawyers, activists and to the people whose lives are directly affected by the events and issues we cover. For emotion we look to regular folks, assuming that they are windows into how the general public thinks and feels.

Sometimes we're looking for comments that confirm what we're trying to say in the story. And we want to impress our bosses by showing that we've been out on the street and were not just loitering in our cubicles.

The fact that Greg Packer's quotes have turned up everywhere suggests that man-on-the-street interviews are worthless. As one of

By SHERYL MCCARTHY
McCarthy is a Newsday columnist.



my colleagues pointed out: "What if there's only one man!" What's more, Packer's overuse suggests that it doesn't matter whom reporters talk to, as long as they get a quote from somebody. And because Packer's so available, why not just go to him and save ourselves some shoe leather?

I think the reason Packer is quoted so often is that journalists hate man-on-the-street interviews. It's demeaning to have to scan a crowd of total strangers, searching for someone who looks like he or she might have something quotable to say, and won't tell you to get lost. What a relief to spot a Packer at the head of the line, ready and eager to give you a sound bite.

Before I write off such interviews as a total waste of time, however, let me say that occasionally they offer us a perspective that surprises us, that gives us some real insight, that points us toward the truth of the story we're trying to tell.

Like the woman in Macy's years ago who, when asked her opinion of a wealthy and powerful real-estate mogul and his then-pregnant mistress, whose antics were being followed religiously by the media, dismissed them both as "trash." There was the man outside the Times Square record store on Sept. 11, 2001, who, asked the meaning of that day's horrible events, said quietly: "I think the United States needs to think about how it treats other people." And there was the guy I met at an exhibit of the proposed designs for rebuilding Ground Zero, who pointed to the design with the tallest building and said, "That one. It'll show the people who bombed us that we're not only back, but we're better."

Sometimes by being out on the street, mingling in the crowd, hearing what people say, we're able to catch what's in the wind, and it changes the whole direction of a story. That's more valuable than anything we pick up in the newsroom—provided we avoid the Greg Packers of the world.

Letter to the Editor

Saipan Tribune welcomes contributions. All letters intended for publication must include the writer's name, address and, if possible, fax or telephone number. Letters are edited for space, clarity and fairness.

An open letter to the governor

Dear Governor Babauta: It is my hope that you would recognize this letter concerning the information listed below, which I also hope will merit an inquiry from your office into the unusual and questionable contract award of RFP02-THC-0052 to Saipan Employment Services & Agency better known as SEAS Inc. I have attempted twice previously to schedule a meeting with you, but to no avail, so I figured maybe this letter will catch your attention.

I have reviewed a copy of SEAS Inc.'s proposal and compared it with another losing bidder whose proposal was \$6,000 lower. And in reviewing both proposals, I have identified questionable concerns pertaining to SEAS Inc.'s bid that are contradictory not only to the P&S regulation with respect to the evaluation and selection process for such an award, but also that the award of such contract to a much higher bidder, which will, in effect, cost the CNMI government an additional \$6,000 per annum.

For example, RFP02-THC-0052's award to SEAS Inc. over a bidder whose bid is \$6,000 lower: Most questionable of all is that not only was the other bidder's proposal lower, but that the losing bidder even offered to make a \$5,000 scholarship contribution to the Tinian Scholarship Program on a yearly basis for the duration of the contract period. SEAS Inc. never made any such offer in their proposal. It would have been an offer that would be beneficial to the Tinian community, especially our youths. But still, SEAS Inc. was awarded the contract over a much lower bidder with far better offers that would have benefited the Tinian Scholarship Program, not to mention saving the CNMI government an additional \$6,000 in yearly expense.

This is not to mention the fact that SEAS Inc. was in the local papers' front-pages recently due to the company nurses' complaint that they weren't receiving their salary. The nurses even came out to seek the assistance of your legal counsel to intervene on their behalf. SEAS Inc., instead, blamed the Commonwealth Health Center, which the company said failed to pay it on time for the services it offered to the CHC. But the CHC denied this and stood firm on its claim that the payments to SEAS Inc. were made on time and that it has no reason to pass the buck on to the CHC.

There are a lot of other things questionable about this issue and this particular company.

Jack T. Quitugua

Dandan, Saipan

A land of fears aplenty

Traveling to the North American continent to attend a weeklong conference in southern California of the California-Pacific Annual Conference (CalPAC) of the United Methodist Church (UMC) has revealed a quiet yet dramatic change in our lives here in this the United States of America.

At the Saipan International Airport, just clearing the distance between the airport departure sidewalks to the departure airline walkway meant suspending what we once took for granted as our right to privacy. The layers of security measures imposed on everyone, from luggage rummage at check-in to finally getting to one's plane seat, to my mind, is a dramatic case of overkill on security. Not only that, one gets the sense that we are harassing the bank depositors after the vault had been looted in the night.

But the physical inconvenience of opening and closing suitcases, emptying pockets of coins and keys, taking off finger ring and watch, tripping off the alarm each time a steel toed shoe come through the security arches, getting one's luggage locks busted for failing to heed the new ruling to keep one's luggage locks unlocked, are nothing compared to the shock of a new reality. The political party and the President who promised us a leaner federal government bureaucracy, has stealthily created a gargantuan government bureaucracy, the Transportation Security Authority (TSA).

Something about the atmosphere established by TSA personnel gives one the creepy feeling that I have to prove I am not guilty. Presumption of innocence until proven guilty had taken a vacation. Once passed the security checks, one then voluntarily scans the crowd to check on lurking miscreants, which only heightens one's fears that any of these strangers taking the same transport I am in may just be one who intends to do us harm!

The hype on the global tentacles of terrorism is everywhere. For sure, there are valid reasons to be cautious about our body's health. Why, a male Caucasian suspected terrorist under Al-Qaida payroll was just arrested on suspicion of planning to wreak havoc to highly symbolic locations.

The mysterious SARS is still crippling tourist-based economies elsewhere, and sending exposed medical practitioners to their graves. A monkeypox virus has just sent shivers to many a Wisconsin spine. We still have the West Nile virus. HIV/AIDS virus, though de-fanged in our overloaded fear threshold bins, remains a constant threat to at-risk behaviors.

Our emotions are equally assaulted by current events. A father in Maryland kills his two daughters and self to spite his Japanese wife. An accused suspected killer of wife and unborn child gets fan mails. A next-door child brings a gun to school. Youth of our acquaintance sells drugs.

Make it so!

A lot of lessons about leadership can be observed from watching reruns of Star Trek. Captain Kirk could assess any situation with his quick wit and keen insight. He was always ready to take action, and willing to put himself in harm's way before sacrificing any of his team.

In contrast, Captain Jean-Luc Picard would gather input from his staff and allow them to make suggestions. When all the options were considered, he would then decide on a course of action and boldly state: "Make it so." He had confidence in those who earned his trust, and he was continually developing the leadership abilities of the people who served with him.

Both Kirk and Picard were effective in their own rights, yet they exhibited different ways of dealing with a situation. Your problems, as a manager, do not involve battling aliens who are laboring to rule with their forces, but they may involve helping your alien workers battle labor and immigration as they enforce their rules.

Your value as a manager will be tied to your ability to get those you supervise to get things done on time, on quality, and within budget. We are going to present a style that would be more aligned with the leadership of Captain Picard – well thought out, deliberate, and one that involves the input of key individuals. Here are seven steps you can take to improve your ability to solve problems and enlist the support of others:

1. Understand the problem situation. Ask: "Do we know everything about this problem situation that we need to know?" The group needs a shared understanding of the problem before an attempt is made to solve it. Many problem-solving efforts are ineffective because everyone does not see the problem in the same way. Develop clearly understood statements of the problems and issues that everyone can focus on to resolve.

2. Clarify the purpose to be served. Ask: "What are we trying to do here, and is this what we should be doing?" If this question is not answered, the group may expend their energy on something that should not have been started. It is vital that the group arrives at a shared understanding of the goal to be achieved.

3. Identify obstacles that will hinder your progress. Ask: "What are the specific things that would keep us from achieving our goal?" Involve the people who can help you resolve the problem, and have them list all the possible obstacles that could slow or stop your progress. Those hidden obstacles can become major speed bumps for your team to overcome. If properly anticipated, they can be avoided or minimized.

By JAIME R. VERGARA

Strictly a personal view. Vergara writes a weekly column for the Saipan Tribune.



Police cracked down on an innocent 6-year-old's lemonade stand in Naples, Florida, after a neighbor complained. We are clearly divesting ourselves of trust and confidence in our neighbors.

Our leaders' emerging image that he and his Cabinet loosely handled facts and intelligence reports prior the war against Iraq is becoming appalling.

But more crippling is the deflation of our spirits as our institutions of faith, love and hope succumb to despair and cynicism. Here in the Church pews at American Baptist-related Redlands University, the gathered Methodists have awakened to the fact that their denomination's stagnant membership's mean age is 56 as compared with 33 for the nation. Such reality has very specific implications to health care, particularly of its retired clergy families who, not unlike the rest of the nation, are living longer than when their health insurance and retirement packages were first configured. As membership declines, revenues become scarce, and health care premiums rise, cost of maintaining personnel has become the focus of passionate discourse rather than in strategizing to give flesh and substance to the vision and mission, the spirit of the congregations.

The beleaguered Roman Catholic Church's Cardinal Mahoney stumbles after each revelation of yet another ethical violation of one of His Eminence's pedophilic clergy. Mainline Protestant denominations have also gone into defensive trenches to make sure that their clergy mirrors the pristine reputation of Claudia Procula, Pontius Pilate's wife. Even here in CalPAC normally staid UMC's clergy ranks, one of its previous ethnic poster boys had to retire prematurely on allegations of sexual misconduct.

Unfortunately, in our zeal to take cover, due process, the rule of evidence, and the practice of truth telling are quickly sacrificed.

In a society that has created the comfort zone as a measurable and required quality of typical human existence, including life in the military service, our sense of body, mind and spiritual comfort zones are in the grip of incapacitating fear. With doubts on the integrity of the Presidential Office to the Parish confessional, who is there left to trust?

By RIK and JANEL VILLEGAS

Rik is a business instructor at NMC and Janel is the owner of Positively Outrageous Results. They have consulted with over 400 businesses in 40 different industries. For better business results go to BizResults.biz to read previous articles.



4. Determine the best actions to overcome obstacles. Ask: "What are the best possible actions or alternatives available to change, improve, or overcome this problem and its associated obstacles?" Draw on the experience, knowledge, and judgment of your best-informed people to generate a list of actions that can help solve the problem, and then choose the very best ideas.

5. Determine and organize your resources. Ask: "What are the specific resources of people, time, money, equipment, and technology to allow us to achieve our goal?" Count the cost of what it will take to achieve each action, and develop alternative sources, if necessary, to ensure your team has the needed resources to accomplish the goal.

6. Create a workable plan. Ask: "What is the best possible plan of actions to resolve this problem and realize our goal?" After selecting the best actions and organizing your resources, arrange those actions into a time sequence to form a plan of implementation. List the possible obstacles, and how they will be dealt with if encountered. Do not be satisfied with just creating a rough draft, but continue to fine-tune your plan into something that will encourage people to take action.

7. Communicate your plan to gain agreement. Ask: "How can we communicate our plan to have the greatest impact possible and gain maximum support?" Identify the audience whom the plan should be shared with, and then share the logic and data used to support your analysis of the situation and why you feel the best direction is communicated in your plan.

After all of this is done, there is one more step that is vitally important. All the plans in the world will not help you realize results until someone takes action and implements the steps of the plan. Referring back to Captain Picard, strong leadership will be required to put the plan into action and "make it so!"

Saipan Tribune

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Guamanians line up for war compensation

At 76, Nicolas Pangelinan has no trouble remembering and talking about how he suffered when Japanese forces occupied Guam during World War II.

"One time someone caught one of our workers sleeping," said Pangelinan, recalling how he and other Guam residents were forced to work in the fields. "So we were all forced to line up and slap each other. Oh, the turmoil we had to go through."

The Agana Heights resident's story is one of many that the Guam War Claims Review Commission, which opened its office at the Chamorro Village in Hagatña, wants to know about.

About 20,000 people lived on Guam during the Japanese occupation more than a half-century ago.

As one of the estimated 10,000 still alive, Pangelinan can visit the Chamorro Village office and fill out the commission's questionnaire for survivors.

"What we're trying to do is get a census, what kind of injuries were suffered by the people of Guam," said Benjamin J. Cruz, former justice of the Guam Supreme Court and member of the review commission.

The focus of the questionnaire, in accordance with the Guam War Claims

Review Commission Act, is to discover instances of infliction of death, personal injury, forced labor, forced march and internment. Forced prostitution and rape would fall under personal injury.

After the questionnaires are turned in, public hearings will take place at the Guam Legislature on Dec. 8 and 9 to allow war survivors to talk about their experience.

As for survivors and their relatives off island, the commission will send out letters to Guam clubs in the mainland, and ask them to help spread the word about the commission's effort. Cruz said that in the last Census, there were about 33,000 Chamorros in California.

"Depending on the responses we get, we may have a hearing in each of the states," Cruz said.

According to Pacific Daily News files, Japan invaded Guam in 1941. For the next three years, residents were subjected to atrocities including torture and internment, files state.

A draft commission report for the U.S. Secretary of the Department of the Interior is due May 9, 2004. On June 9, 2004, the final report will be presented to Congress.

A decision will be made whether there was a disparity in compensation.

Cruz said Congress has asked for a report to see if reparations need to be made.

"Hopefully because they're the ones asking us to do it, they'll be more willing to address it," Cruz said.

It may be difficult for some survivors to talk about their experiences, said Tony Unpingco, commission member and former speaker of the Guam Legislature. The commission will respect anonymity requests.

"One person was telling me, as soon as someone brings up the war, the first thing in his mind would be all the dead people in front," Unpingco said.

Pangelinan said he would testify before Congress if that means his family could receive compensation for the atrocities he and his family went through.

"I wish they could put me up in Washington, D.C., and talk to them. We suffered during the Japanese occupation," he said.

Cruz said, for the sake of the survivors and their children, he wishes for a speedy process.

"I hope we can deal with reparations once and for all before everyone passes," Cruz said. "And they can go peacefully knowing that it's been addressed." (PDN/PIR)

TOURISTS

From Page 1

Haneda and the resumption of flights from Kansai.

The Japanese market remained strong with 27,125 visitors, posting a 16-percent increase compared to October 2002's 23,407.

The Chinese market showed improved performance by posting a high 59 percent rise, with a total of 736 visitors last month. Considered as a surging market before the SARS outbreak caused an international travel scare, Chinese arrivals indicated a takeoff after plunging to almost zero.

Arrivals from Guam totaled 1,799, reflecting a 31-percent growth.

The CNMI's second largest tourism market—Korea—retained its rank. The market had 5,353 visitors entering the

CNMI last month, although the figure was actually 25 percent lower than October 2002's 7,297.

"Since February 2003, visitors from Korea had declined due to the termination of the Korean Airlines' direct flights, compounded by the Iraqi conflict and SARS outbreak," the MVA said. "Despite the decline, the Korean market still maintained its position as the CNMI's second largest visitor market."

But the MVA assured that it has been working to alleviate the situation following the pullout of Korean Airlines flights. The MVA said it has been stimulating travel demand from Korea by working with industry partners in the Asian country. It cited the October visit of some 1,200 individuals from Yoon's English Academy, a major English education provider in Korea.

"The group, which consisted of

employees from the academy, came to Saipan in segments of 150 to 250 as their reward for their exceptional on-the-job performance at the institution. As a result, to accommodate this group, Asiana Airlines had seven extra flights for the month of October 2003," the MVA said.

The MVA said it has tied up with Asiana Airlines to come up with an incentive plan for Korean travel agents. The Volume Incentive Program commenced in September 1 and will run through December 31, 2003, the MVA said.

"In the month of October, three companies in Korea exceeded the 10 percent quota while another company exceeded the 20 percent quota. These four companies will receive advertising support from the MVA for advertising the destination and incentive tickets from the carrier to Saipan for their excellent performance," it added.

BABAUTA

From Page 1

admiral for the entire Pacific, he's got the biggest command in the entire world. His command includes the CNMI. I'm looking forward to that because we want to know where we are in their planning scheme," said Babauta.

Also part of the briefing's agenda is the proposed use of Pagan as a long-term military training site, the increased

use of Saipan as an R&R port for the U.S. Navy and the increased use of Tinian as a Marine training.

Babauta pitched the request for a briefing with Fargo while he was in Hawaii last month, attending the Pacific Island Leaders Conference.

"He was very gracious and agreed to give me a full blown briefing and so I'm going to invite a handful of key individuals from the CNMI to join me in Honolulu for this presentation. It's going to be at the Camp Smith where

the admiral is based," said the governor.

A delegation of eight members, including Babauta, is expected to meet with Fargo on Nov. 24.

The governor's party will include Callaghan, Military and Veterans Affairs Special Assistant Frank Cepeda, CNMI's Civilian Aide to the Secretary of the Army Edward Manibusan, two unnamed members of the House and Senate, Bishop Tomas Camacho and Public Lands commissioner Henry Hofschneider.

Wright lacked state review as mandated by the CNMI Constitution.

It means, he said, that the NMC is not authorized by the CNMI Legislature to incur a public debt.

The NMC intends to use the loan money for the renovation of La Fiesta complex (\$5 million) and for purchase of collateral equipment, costing some \$3 million.

The NMC recently purchased La Fiesta Shopping Mall in San Roque for its Pacific Gateway project, which begins in fall 2004. The program aims to attract foreign students interested in studying in the U.S.

The college entered into a \$7.5-million purchase contract of the property, using a \$3.5-million deposit from a grant through the Governor's Office. The remaining \$4 million shall be paid in 20 years at an annual payment of \$200,000 beginning Oct. 2004.



Remengesau ponders gambling bills

KOROR (Palau Horizon/PIR)—The new casino gaming bill approved by both houses of the national legislature now awaits President Tommy Remengesau's signature.

However, Remengesau maintains serious reservations regarding casino legislation.

The measure passed by lawmakers calls for a limited gambling industry in Palau.

A gaming industry, the lawmakers said, would bring high-end tourists to Palau.

It would also create benefits to the private sector by creating new jobs, infrastructure development revenues to the country and Angaur where the proposed casino would be established.

Senate Bill 6-233 proposes to allow limited gambling in Angaur under the supervision of a National Gaming Control Commission.

The commission will "closely monitor" the effects of the gaming industry to the citizens and the environment.

The commission will then determine if the gaming industry should be expanded beyond Angaur.

Lawmakers said it is about time that Palau allows casino gambling, claiming that there is no direct evidence it would cause crimes.

In May 2002, a similar bill was approved by the Olbiil Era Kelulau and was submitted to the president for signature.

Remengesau rejected the bill, citing several concerns.

The OEK said the new legislation addresses those concerns.

Solomons police suspect paid while on run

MELBOURNE, Australia (Radio Australia/PIR)—The Solomon Islands government reportedly has paid several million Australian dollars on false claims and allowances to

police officers, among them a suspected murderer on the run.

Solomon Islands Finance Minister Francis Zama says some of the money has been recouped, but more is expected when the auditing of government finances has been completed.

Zama confirmed that a Solomon Islands police sergeant and suspect in a high profile murder case continued to be paid for seven months while on the run. He said steps to suspend the pay of Edmond Sae, who is accused of killing former police commissioner Sir Frederick Soaki, have been taken.

Police Commissioner William Morrell says nothing was done about the discrepancy earlier because the police previously lacked the will. But he says that attitude has changed with the arrival of the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands.

Meanwhile, Zama says money is being deducted from other police officers' salaries as a review continues into all police allowances during the last four years.

Fiji chiefs accused of role in coups

WELLINGTON, New Zealand (RNZI/PIR)—Some of Fiji's chiefs have been accused of being behind the 1987 and 2000 coups.

Fiji TV says the accusation was made by one of Fiji's highest traditional chiefs, Adi Lady Lala Mara, the wife of the president deposed in the May 2000 coup, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara.

Opening a meeting of the great Council of Chiefs, Adi Lady Lala said the perpetrators of these events were greedy and were false prophets spreading uncertainty, threats and disharmony among the races in the country.

She did not name them but said chiefs should re-examine their role, especially in relation to promoting racial harmony in a multi-cultural nation like Fiji.

She said the coups had brought Fiji to its knees.

FUNDING

From Page 1

respectively, stressed that the federal agency understands the local government's financial situation, disclosing that the EPA would come up with a revised compliance schedule for the dump's final closure.

"We have been very flexible and understanding. But we want to keep the momentum going," McCarroll said. "The next thing [to do is] closing the dump in a safe way, preventing leachate from contaminating the water [Saipan Lagoon]."

The EPA officials noted that the Marpi landfill and the Lower Base Refuse Transfer Station appeared to be operating well. McCarroll said the CNMI deserves credit for putting up the multi-million-dollar Marpi landfill, which is considered as the first fully compliant non-military landfill facility in the entire Pacific.

"The important step [was] to stop putting waste to the [Puerto Rico] dump," McCarroll said.

Earlier this year, the office of Lt. Gov. Diego T. Benavente, who chairs the CNMI Solid Waste Task Force, disclosed plans to rehabilitate the old dumpsite by capping it with soil and vegetation.

Last April 2003, Benavente's chief-of-staff, Felix M. Sablan, disclosed that the government was trying to identify funding sources to implement the plan that was estimated to cost between \$8 and \$10 million.

Sablan said the dump could even be converted onto a recreational facility like a baseball or soccer field.

He said the task force handpicked the plan from two other options, including the payment of monetary penalty the EPA might impose on the CNMI for non-compliance with its administrative order. He said the other option was the removal of the mountainous pile of trash, an undertaking that entails significant environmental concerns and permitting and high costs.

Located near the Saipan Lagoon, the dump towers over 90 feet on some 20 acres of land. In the early 1990s, EPA cited the CNMI for violations of the Clean Water Act, as leachate resulting from the dumpsite polluted the lagoon.

Sablan said the immediate need is the dump's minimum closure by stabilizing its slope facing the lagoon to prevent possible collapse and contamination of the water. But he said the CNMI would have to spend some \$4 million to do this, before taking on capping and vegetating the dump next.

NMC

From Page 1

proclamation of Nov. 17-22 as the International Education Week and Cultural Day at the NMC.

Wright said that the loan package would allow the NMC to pay without interest in the first three years.

In a separate interview, Atalig said the NMC has up to Dec. 31, 2003 to file its application with USDA.

In its notice to NMC dated Oct. 31, 2003, the USDA-Guam said that the NMC is "eligible for funding and has a chance to compete with similar applications for other grantees."

It said a pre-conference interview with NMC is not necessary. It added that the USDA just needs to analyze in detail NMC's actual application for the funding.

This, even as Saipan Rep. Stanley

Torres earlier asked the USDA to abstain from making any loan agreement with NMC until the local community college obtains authorization from the CNMI Legislature.

"I am officially asking your office to abstain from any agreements with NMC loans or USDA being a loan guarantor, until NMC obtains CNMI legislative approval," said Rep. Stanley Torres in an Oct. 22 letter to USDA Secretary Ann M. Veneman.

Torres had cited that the NMC attempted to secure a \$10-million funding assistance from the Legislature but it was denied for lack of planning and for being highly speculative.

Further, he said that NMC advertised a \$10-million loan from private lenders, but there were no takers.

Torres had also cited that a Sept. 25 USDA pre-application form signed by

‘Sugar Dock is one of most polluted beaches on Saipan’

By JOHN RAVELO
REPORTER

Like a sore thumb in a crowd expressing their favorable sentiments over Sugar Dock, a consultant to the project said the site is actually one of the most polluted beaches on Saipan.

Micronesian Environmental Services’ John Gourley, who was with Commonwealth Ports Authority executive director Carlos Salas during Monday’s public hearing, described the Sugar Dock as one of the “top seven most polluted beach in the lagoon.”

Arousing objections from the crowd, Gourley said he would just like people to know. Gourley said he based his conclusion on regular marine water quality monitoring conducted by the Division of Environmental Quality on Saipan’s beaches.

“DEQ laboratory results for enterococci testing from 97 water samples taken between October 17, 2001 and October 22, 2003 had 59 (61 percent) water quality violations,” stated an information sheet provided by Gourley during the hearing.

“Provided the original water samples were obtained randomly over time, there appears to be a chronic problem with bacterial

contamination at the boat launching ramp. As such, Sugar Dock is ‘red flagged’ much of the time,” it added.

Gourley showed aerial photographs of the Sugar Dock and nearby areas taken in 1989 and 1996. He said that, despite the dredging of some 40,000 cubic yards of dredge material in 1990, the 1996 photo indicated no significant erosion that took place. Conversely, he noted the accretion of sand immediately south of Sugar Dock.

This time, Gourley said the Sugar Dock project only involves approximately 20,000 cubic yards of dredge material, which could be used to replenish the eroded beach north of the dock.

“The beach area that lies immediately north of Sugar Dock...has a known erosion problem. The beach area was targeted during the 2000 maintenance dredging project as a replenishment project and was rebuilt with dredge material. This particular area has also been identified as a recipient for rebuilding with the dredge material generated from this project, if approved by the regulatory agencies,” according to Gourley.

The consultant also maintained that the Sugar Dock could still be used for recreation even if the new Saipan-Tinian

ferry uses the facility.

Salas said the public should consider the economic benefits the project could bring to the CNMI.

“I also used to swim everyday at the Sugar Dock,” Salas said, but he added that its renovation and the transportation system would also benefit tourists.

But Salas assured the CPA would be sensitive to the public’s sentiments, saying that he would bring up their comments to the agency’s board. He also disclosed that the CPA had complied with the subpoena issued by the U.S. Attorney’s Office for a copy of relevant documents to the Sugar Dock and ferry operations project.

The CPA plans to conduct dredging activities and the construction of a ramp seaward that will improve passenger access to the ferry. The transportation system project entails major rehabilitation of the 276-foot-long, 30-foot-wide Sugar Dock, necessitating the issuance of permits by regulatory agencies.

British shipbuilding company FBMA is constructing the 150-foot vessel in Cebu, Philippines, which could accommodate and transport 35 vehicles and 300 passengers. The CPA said the ferry could carry not just personal vehicles, but also buses and heavy equipment.

m tenorio
xmas

mayor xmas

pete a xmas

babauta xmas

‘Community’s respect for elderly still strong’

By LIBERTY DONES
REPORTER

The community’s respect for the elderly remains strong as shown in their outreach activities to the man amkos, especially during special occasions such as Christmas, according to Aging Center executive director Joe Palacios.

“This, we appreciate because it indicates that the community still truly values the man amkos. Our senior citizens appreciate that. They’re very glad when they see public officials, community leaders, and children here,” said Palacios during Monday’s luncheon Christmas party at the Center, which was hosted by the Governor’s Office.

The event was attended by Gov. Juan N. Babauta, Lt. Gov. Diego T. Benavente, Community and Cultural Affairs Secretary Juan L. Babauta, and other cabinet members.

Yesterday, Benavente and VFW Post 3457 members treated the man amkos for another Christmas lunch.

Palacios said that various groups have been paying visits to the elders, bringing them gifts and offering them entertainment.

These included Taga Riders, Rotary Club Saipan, Hotel Association of NMI, Korean Women Association, Chen

Chulu Group, Whispering Palms, Saipan Southern High School, Kagman High School, and Marianas High School, among others.

He said the elders also recently received \$3,000 worth of gift packages from Avon Products.

“It’s really nice to see the community coming here. Taking time to come here means a lot,” he said.

The Aging Center attends to 105 congregates, or those who come to the center Monday to Friday, and to 188 other homebound clients.

The Center accepts clients who are 60 years old and above, regardless of nationality. Those who choose to congregate at the center stay there from 8am to 2pm.

They are picked up in the morning and dropped off a little after lunch. The seniors are served snacks and lunch for free. They also get to play their favorite game or sports inside the center or in a pre-arranged outdoor location.

The center, which operates under the Department of Community and Cultural Affairs, receives federal funding for the program.

Palacios said the Center currently has three mini buses, five vans, and five sedans. “We pick up and drop off clients all over the island. This is a service to them.”

Air Tahiti Nui strike settled

PAPE’ETE, Tahiti (Oceania Flash/PIR)—A strike at French Polynesia’s international flag carrier, Air Tahiti Nui, has ended after a meeting between unions and the French territory’s President Gaston Flosse.

The strike started on December 11.

It was called by unions of flying and commercial staff.

Last week, negotiations had ground to a halt between ATN management and the unions.

Flosse said in a release that he had asked strikers to “immediately cease their action” and “they decided to go back to work”.

Flosse said he had undertaken to have their log of claims, mainly

on salary increase, taken into account by ATN management and the Board at a meeting scheduled for this week on Tuesday.

ATN’s Chairman, Nelson Levy, has also resigned over the weekend.

He is to be replaced this week by Geffry Salmon, formerly a Chairman of Office of Posts and Telecom.

It is not clear whether the two developments bear any connection.

The strike however did not have significant impact on international air links.

It was reported to have been followed by only bout fifty personnel out of the over 280 flying and commercial staff.

PNG minister lauds Libya

PORT MORESBY, Papua New Guinea (The National/PIR)—The Papua New Guinea government has lauded Libya’s decision to abandon its program to develop weapons of mass destruction and to allow international weapons inspectors into the country.

Foreign Affairs and Immigration Minister Sir Rabbie Namaliu welcomed the decision and said other countries should follow suit.

“In the Asia-Pacific region, we hope North Korea can be encouraged to follow Libya’s example and contribute to easing tensions on the Korean Peninsula,” he said.

Sir Rabbie hoped the international community would recognize the step taken by

Libya and its leader Colonel Muammar Gadhafi.

“I hope it will lead to the lifting of sanctions against Libya, and the resumption of relations, especially with the UK and the U.S.”

Sir Rabbie said smaller nations would remain vulnerable as long as there were countries that continued to develop destructive weapons.

“But the peace of the world is always at risk as well—and that is why Libya’s decision is both historic and important, and why continued dialogue with countries such as North Korean remains important,” he added.

PNG does not have any formal diplomatic ties with either Libya or North Korea.

Business

Tax-free health care accounts begin Jan.

By MARK SHERMAN
AP WRITER

The Bush administration advertised new tax-free health savings accounts, which will be available beginning next week, as a way for Americans to gain greater control of health-care spending.

To escape taxation on both contributions and withdrawals, dollars set aside in the accounts must be spent for medical expenses.

"This account is a good option and available to all Americans. Every year the money not spent would stay in the account and gain interest tax-free, just like an IRA," White House spokesman Scott McClellan said Monday.

However, guidance issued Monday by the Treasury Department limits eligibility for the special savings accounts to people who have health insurance policies with annual deductibles—the amount paid to cover expenses before benefits begin—of at least \$1,000 for individuals and \$2,000 for families.

In addition, Americans 65 years and older cannot open the new health accounts.

The conditions were stipulated in the Medicare law passed by Congress and signed this month by President Bush.

Despite the limitations, millions of Americans will qualify for the accounts, Treasury officials said.

Money deposited in the accounts could be invested, then withdrawn free of taxes for most medical expenses, including prescription drugs, long-term care services and Medicare premiums. Employers also would pay no

taxes on amounts they contribute as employee benefits.

Individuals, their employers or their family members can put away the amount of their annual insurance deductibles, up to \$2,600 a year for individuals and \$5,150 a year for families. People age 55 to 64 could make additional contributions to build a medical nest egg.

An account stays with a person for a lifetime. Upon death, assets can be transferred tax-free to a spouse, who also would be limited to using the money for out-of-pocket medical expenses.

The accounts can be set up beginning Jan. 1 and are expected to reduce Treasury revenues by \$6.4 billion over a decade.

Critics contend the accounts establish a tax shelter for the wealthy and are a precedent for future accounts to let affluent families evade taxes.

They also worry that the accounts will increase health costs gradually for many people by drawing young, healthy and affluent people out of the general pool of health insurance into high-deductible insurance plans.

"If health savings accounts prove popular, as congressional scorekeepers expect, low-deductible insurance will gradually become more expensive or even disappear," wrote tax expert Leonard Burman and health expert Linda Blumberg of the Urban Institute, a private think tank in Washington.

Aetna and UnitedHealth Group already have signaled their intention to offer the accounts. Several other insurers are expected to follow suit, said Joe Walshe, a principal in PricewaterhouseCoopers HR Services.



SALE BONANZA FLOPS

Holiday shoppers leave the Super Wal-Mart in Hialeah Gardens, Fla., Monday, Dec. 22, 2003. The critical last weekend before Christmas didn't deliver the sale bonanza merchants were hoping for, with Wal-Mart announcing Monday that last-minute buying showed "some improvement" but was not enough to offset weak business in the early part of the month.

AP

Record industry may not subpoena providers

The recording industry can't force Internet providers to identify music downloaders, a federal appeals court said Friday in a major decision shielding online privacy while undercutting the industry's anti-piracy campaign.

The ruling does not legalize distributing copyrighted songs over the Internet, but it will greatly increase the cost and effort for the Washington-based Recording Industry Association of America to track such activity and sue those who are swapping music online.

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia overturned a trial judge's decision to enforce copyright subpoenas, one of the most effective tools

used by the recording industry. The subpoena power was established by a law passed before the explosive growth of swapping music online.

The appeals court said the 1998 copyright law doesn't cover popular file-sharing networks used by tens of millions of Americans to download songs.

The judges sympathized with the recording industry, which has cited declining profits, noting that "stakes are large." But they said it was not the role of courts to rewrite the 1998 law, "no matter how damaging" the practice of swapping has become to the music industry or threatens to become to the motion picture and software industries. (AP)

villagomez xmas

Most toys made in China, elsewhere

By SIOBHAN McDONOUGH
AP WRITER

Parents who are sticklers for buying American may have a rough time as they whisk through toy stores this holiday season.

Play-Doh, Etch A Sketch, Matchbox and Hot Wheels cars: one icon of American childhood fantasies after another is made in China.

“Almost everything here is made somewhere else,” lamented Ervin Goodall, cruising down the aisles of a toy department in search of gifts for his grandchildren.

The “Made in USA” label is found mainly on board games, but even that is a

multinational crapshoot. The Lord of the Rings Trivial Pursuit game is American-made but with Chinese dice.

Buying American may make people feel good, but experts say it’s often an afterthought.

“They say they care, but they just want a good deal,” said Sidney Weintraub, an international trade specialist at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, an independent Washington research organization.

It’s what’s under the tree—and price—that count most.

“When I shop and see something I like, I get it,” said Goodall, 54, of Washington, eyeing a made-in-China



Shoppers at a toy store at the Tyson's Mall shopping center in McLean, Va., examine the remaining toys on the shelves Saturday, Dec. 20, 2003. Although parents may prefer to buy toys with a “Made in America” label, that’s becoming a challenge as many toys now have a “Made in China” tag.

“poseable raging Hulk.”

“I consider myself patriotic,” he said, “but I don’t worry about where it’s made.”

Americans’ appetite for imported goods reached a new high in October, as the U.S. trade deficit with China climbed to a record \$13.57 billion.

That same month, overall demand for imported toys and games went up \$36 million, to \$2 billion. At least 75 percent of toys sold in the United States are foreign-made, and about two-thirds of the imports come from China, according to the Toy Industry Association. Taiwan, Malaysia, Thailand and Canada are among other leading suppliers.

Many of the Chinese-made toys are products of American companies, which go to China and elsewhere in search of cheaper labor and other essentials.

Darrell Jones of Arlington, Va., pushing a shopping cart overflowing with toys at Target, said he wasn’t surprised that most items he set out to buy his 3-year-old daughter were Chinese made—a Magna bike and magic screen learning pad from Playskool.

“If it works, I have no problem with it being made in China,” said Jones, 43. After all, he said, “Nothing is all-America anymore.

“It doesn’t make any difference, as long as the stuff is safe and works.”

Justin Fruehauf, 27, another Arlington parent, said he studies consumer reports and is tenacious about buying safe and quality toys.

“It’s important for people to keep buying American,” he said, adding that he’d be willing to pay \$5 extra for an American-made item over a comparable Chinese-made one.

Despite the foreign dominance of toy manufacturing, Americans still work in the business—32,400 in 2000—and many of the leading companies are American.

In the aisles at Target, the spread of multinational toy making is evident, with some parts made in America and the rest in other countries.

Pictionary, for example, has a timer made in Taiwan, playing pieces and dice made in the Britain and the rest from America.

Scrabble is labeled American-made, but its racks, tiles and letter bags are from China. That pretty much leaves the board and packaging as a U.S. product.

Taking a bath with Crayola is another worldly experience. The Bath Tub Finger Paints are from China but the Bath Tub Tints—fizzy watercolor tablets—are from the United States.

Indonesian labor produces Swan Lake Barbie and Happy Birthday Barbie. The plastic Volvo that carries around her friends Midge and Alan is from China.

Irene Johnson, 28, of Washington, will do almost anything to please her 8-year-old daughter this Christmas.

“I would like to buy something made in America to help our economy, but generally, I don’t look,” she said. “When you’re trying to please a child, you don’t want to be the Grinch, to be the bad parent on the block.”

Marcus Noland, senior fellow at the Institute for International Economics in Washington, said the United States remains relatively strong in certain high-tech fields, in advanced electronics, in science-based industries like chemicals and aviation.

He said China has not displaced U.S. manufacturing nearly as much as it has pushed other countries from the U.S. market. Most of China’s gains in the first half of the 1990s came at the expense of Taiwan and other such manufacturing nations, not U.S. producers.

The areas where Chinese exports to the United States are concentrated are on labor-intensive markets: brooms, garments, shoes, toys. These are industries the United States has exited, Noland said.

covenant xmas

Feds look at fuel economy rules for SUVs

By JONATHAN D. SALANT
AP WRITER

The Bush administration is looking at making larger SUVs, such as the Hummer H2, Ford Excursion and Chevrolet Suburban, and large pickup trucks comply with federal fuel economy standards for the first time.

The National Highway Transportation Safety Administration also said it is seeking comments on whether to change the definitions of cars and light trucks. Most sport utility vehicles now fall under the classification of light trucks, although they are used primarily as passenger vehicles. Heavier vehicles, such as the Hummer H2, weigh more than 8,500 pounds and are exempt from fuel standards.

"This marks the beginning of an important national dialogue," Transportation Secretary Norman Y. Mineta said. "We can and must work together to save more fuel, increase passenger safety and protect American jobs."

Deb Callahan, president of the League of Conservation Voters, an environmental group, said the Bush administration should simply treat SUVs and light trucks like cars and force all of them to get better gasoline mileage. "If they really cared about raising fuel efficiency standards, let's raise fuel efficiency standards and have SUVs and light trucks and automobiles all comply," she said.

In April, NHTSA announced a slight increase in the fuel economy standards for a manufacturer's fleet of light trucks. The new standards said trucks for the 2007 model year must average 22.2 miles per gallon, up from the current 20.7 mpg.

The required Corporate Average Fuel Economy, or CAFE, standard for new automobiles remains 27.5 mpg.

Because so many motorists are buying SUVs, the average fuel economy for all 2003 model vehicles on the road was 20.8 mpg, down 6 percent from

the peak year of 1988, according to the Environmental Protection Agency.

Transportation Department spokesman Leonardo Alcivar said even the environmentalists have to agree that the current standards are outdated. "There is no ambiguity about the fact that these standards, given the changes in vehicle fleets, don't do what they mean to do to improve fuel efficiency and maximize safety," Alcivar said.

Automobile manufacturers are reviewing the proposal.

"They painted some broad strokes but we need to see the fine print," said Eron Shostek, a spokesman for the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers.

President Bush has opposed most efforts to improve fuel economy, saying they could cost U.S. jobs. An energy bill endorsed by the White House and passed by the House does not touch the current standards, but the legislation has stalled in the Senate. Bush has raised \$1.9 million for his re-election from the oil and automotive industries.

In addition to considering fuel economy standards for large SUVs that weigh from 8,500 to 10,000 pounds, NHTSA said it is considering new fuel economy standards for light trucks and SUVs based on their weight.

Environmentalists said such standards would encourage automobile manufacturers to build heavier vehicles to take advantage of requirements that are more lax.

"The Bush administration is proposing to manipulate the most effective energy saving law to benefit the auto and oil industry polluters," said Daniel Becker, director of the global warming and energy project for the Sierra Club. "The Bush administration proposal is a giant Christmas gift for polluters but threatens consumers and the environment."

The Transportation Department said its proposal regarding truck weights was designed to reduce any incentive to make the vehicles lighter, which could make them less safe.

Pets get photos with Santa, holiday items

By MICHELLE RUSHLO
AP BUSINESS WRITER

This Christmas season may be going to the dogs—and cats. Pet supply stores, which have enjoyed strong growth even in the soft U.S. economy, are doing a booming business in holiday and seasonal gifts for pets as owners stock up on sweaters, antler headbands, jingle bell collars and other holiday items.

"This year, it's just proliferating beyond anything," said Bob Vetere, chief operating officer of the American Pet Products Manufacturers Association. "It's just exponential. It's beyond anything we've ever seen before."

Americans are expected to spend \$31 billion on their pets this year, including vet services, food and supplies, according to APPMA, an industry group. That's up from \$17 billion in 1994, with a market that continued to grow during the economic downturn.

The industry doesn't track numbers of holiday-themed products, but Vetere said the number and variety have grown substantially in the last few years.

The gift giving isn't confined to December either, he said. "You can't believe the stuff they have for Valentine's Day. It seems like it's just any excuse for a pet gift."

When San Diego-based Petco surveyed its customers online, it found more than 85 percent said they would buy their pets a holiday gift. Sixteen percent said they would spend more than \$100.

Americans are "adding their pets to their gift lists," said Alisa Bartmess, the cat-toy buyer for



Bulldogs Sybil, left, and Trudy are next in line to have a photo taken with a person dressed as Santa "Paws," Sunday, Dec. 7, 2003, at a PETsMART, in Scottsdale, Ariz.

Phoenix-based PetsMart.

Pet supply companies say increasing numbers of pet owners think of themselves as "pet parents," meaning they treat their dogs and cats more like family than critters.

A string of pet owners having their dogs' Christmas photos taken at a PetsMart store in north Phoenix agreed.

"He's an only child," said Rosemary Connell of her German shepherd mix Bosco. She and her husband, John, brought the puppy in for obedience school and a Santa

photo since it's Bosco's first Christmas with them.

The Phoenix couple said Bosco gets the family treatment from extended members of their family, too, with some relatives in New York shipping gifts for Bosco.

Apparel—ranging from red Santa suits to collars with red and green lights—are among the season's most popular purchases, said Kevin Drouse, a PetsMart store director.

Even upscale retailers have begun offering apparel for the holidays. British clothier

Burberry offers \$225 lambswool check collar dog coats in its holiday catalogue. Ralph Lauren sells \$95 cashmere sweaters in four colors and a toiletry collection that includes dog cologne.

Petco spokesman Shawn Underwood said all the holiday gift-giving even affects non-pet owners. Petco sees an increase in the number of gift cards sold around the holidays, and the company suspects they're being purchased by family and friends as gifts for other people's pets.

"What do you buy for the pet who has everything?" he asked.

kfc
+red/blue

Nation

Survivor: The financial islands

By NANCY MCKEON, DAN BEYERS and MARYANN HAGGERTY
THE WASHINGTON POST

At times, the business world of 2003 seemed as fraught with difficulty and danger as the African bush or the Pearl Islands or any of the other remote locations of the “Survivor” TV series. Instead of 39 days searching for food and drinking water in inhospitable terrain, though, the inhabitants of the Finance Islands—which include Manhattan, Washington, and every investment and retirement account in the United States—spent a whole year searching in equally unfriendly surroundings for earnings, newly tax-favored dividends and a mutual fund that wasn’t making dubious deals on the side.

But this was the year when greedy corporate honchos and duplicitous stock analysts had to step aside to make room for some new bad guys: mutual fund families that demonstrated that fund investing might not provide a level playing field for the little investor.

Apple iPod

The Apple iPod was the little gizmo that could. And what it could do was give mainstreamers a way to get with digital music technology. With the help of easy-to-manage online sites such as Apple’s iTunes Music Store, it also helped the recording industry survive online song swapping (well, yes, suing the pants off illegal downloaders probably helped, too). In December, Apple reported it had sold more than 25 million tunes, at 99 cents each.



Boeing Co.



Secret machinations of big, proud Boeing Co. haunted the aerospace giant this year. First the company admitted to possessing proprietary documents from rival Lock-

heed Martin Corp. during the bidding for a rocket-launch contract. Then it had to fire its No. 2 executive for alleged misconduct in hiring a former Pentagon official, who also was fired, amid negotiations over a contract for refueling tankers.

Chief executive Philip Condit put out fire after fire, from Boeing’s role in misjudging the damage to the space shuttle Columbia’s wing to news that Europe’s Airbus had eclipsed Boeing’s storied commercial aircraft business in size. Eventually Condit himself bailed, leaving it to his successors to rally the troops by announcing plans for a new mid-size passenger jet, the 7E7, or “Dreamliner.”

Enron

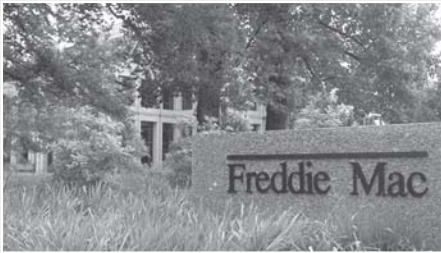
The year came to an end with several major corporate figures still walking away unscathed from the train wrecks that investigators



suspect, but have yet to prove, they caused. Kenneth Lay, once chief executive of Enron, whose precipitous 2001 collapse set off a disastrous chain of corporate events and implosions, spent the year with his lawyers as investigators continued to probe.

Ankling down the same road was Jeffrey Skilling, another former Enron chief. Ditto Bernard Ebbers, founder of WorldCom. In his fourth report on Enron, bankruptcy examiner R. Neal Batson found grounds to sue Lay and Skilling to recover millions in company loans but discovered no smoking-gun evidence that either knew about the company’s wrongdoing. Similarly, federal prosecutors have not charged Ebbers as they probe WorldCom’s accounting tricks.

Freddie Mac



Freddie Mac, the nation’s second-largest buyer of home mortgages, started the year with an accounting question and ended it with the answer,

a hard slap. Freddie, it seems, used complicated derivatives to smooth reported profits, including one year when it overestimated earnings, to the tune of about \$5 billion over three years.

That disclosure led to men overboard—the top executives, who, a report charged, used the derivatives to lessen volatility to keep Wall Street happy and ensure their own performance bonuses. The uproar triggered scrutiny of another special relationship, the government-sponsored status of Freddie and its larger competitor, Fannie Mae, that allows them access to cheaper money. Did the arrangement really mean better borrowing terms for homeowners? Barely, a Federal Reserve study found: It meant enormous clout and profit for Fannie and Freddie but saved the average home buyer maybe \$87 a year.

ctsi new year

Junk emailers, telemarketers

Direct marketing got the one-two punch consumers had been begging for.

In December, President Bush signed legislation criminalizing two favorite tactics of junk e-mailers: using fake origination addresses (making fraudulent offers tough to trace) and “scraping” Web sites for names to add to commercial mailing lists. The 24 billion annual telemarketing calls—all seemingly at dinnertime—took the other hit, by way of the national do-not-call registry. The list, which went into effect in October, had 55.6 million phone numbers registered toward year-end.

Surviving the phone assault: all those aggressive debt-counseling companies, exempted from the ban because they’re nonprofits.



Mutual fund firms



Putnam Investments began 2003 as the nation’s fifth-largest mutual fund family. It ended the year as the sixth-largest, its investors having pulled \$24 billion from the firm’s management as the Boston company faced state and federal charges of trading abuse by its portfolio managers.

Putnam was only one of the mutual fund firms caught by the scandals that erupted in September. In November the

Securities and Exchange Commission said that of the 88 largest fund families, 10 percent permitted illegal late trading, 30 percent gave selective and illegal information to favored customers, 50 percent enabled quick in-and-out trades that hurt their funds and 20 percent failed to give break-point discounts investors deserved.

Some of the big names involved included Alliance Capital, Bank One, Bank of America, Fred Alger, Janus and Prudential Securities, with more likely to emerge.

Wal-Mart

If there’s any competitor that would seem to be able to muscle its way to the top on size alone, it’s Wal-Mart Stores Inc., with more than 1.2



million U.S. employees and 3,000 Wal-Mart stores, supercenters and Sam’s Clubs in the United States alone. Wal-Mart is the nation’s biggest retailer, its biggest toy seller and its biggest grocer.

Detractors complain about the Wal-Mart economy—low-paid employees selling goods made by even lower-paid foreigners. But U.S. shoppers keep heading to the big store on the edge of town for all sorts of supplies (except CDs with dirty lyrics, which the chain won’t sell). This holiday shopping season, however, underlined that maybe the giant’s strength isn’t limitless. Sales at stores open at least a year were at the “low end” of the company’s projected 3 to 5 percent sales growth, company officials said.

WorldCom



The \$500 million penalty, the largest civil fine ever imposed by the Securities and Exchange Commission, was appropriate for what the SEC called the largest financial fraud in history. And yet WorldCom, the nation’s second-largest long-

distance company, would survive its bankruptcy, its reorganization cleared by a federal judge in October. (When it exits Chapter 11, as it’s expected to early next year, the company plans to change its name to MCI.)

John Sidgmore, who became chief executive after founder Bernard Ebbers was forced to resign, presided over the biggest bankruptcy case in U.S. history. He died this month at 52.

Michael Powell

Michael Powell found himself perpetually adjusting to shifting alliances at the Federal Communications Commission this year, as the panel lurched from one divided vote to the next on some of the biggest regulatory questions of the day. The FCC chairman was on the losing end of a 3 to 2 vote to maintain rules governing local telephone competition. He barely won the day in a 3 to 2 vote to loosen media ownership rules, only to provoke howls of protest from Congress, including many prominent Republicans. The vote on News Corp.’s proposed purchase of the DirecTV satellite network? You guessed it: 3 to 2. But Powell, son of Secretary of State Colin Powell, survived to fight another day.



Trials of the rich and infamous

A number of embattled corporate chieftains spent the year awaiting their day in court. L. Dennis Kozlowski, he of the \$6,000 shower

curtain, is already on trial, defending himself against charges that he looted Tyco International when he was chief executive. Household-arts arbiter Martha Stewart lost her bid to have the government drop a securities fraud charge (her public protestations of innocence were designed to prop up her company’s falling stock price, prosecutors argued) and will go to trial on that and other counts in mid-January.

Former Enron chief financial officer Andrew Fastow, charged with dozens of counts of fraud and money laundering, is scheduled for trial on April 20. His wife, Lea Fastow, is scheduled to go on trial in February on charges that she helped her husband avoid paying taxes and improperly profited from his business partnerships.

And federal prosecutors’ Christmas gift to former WorldCom Inc. Chief Financial Officer Scott Sullivan: word that they would try to tie him to 13 kinds of accounting fraud, in addition to the 11 counts of conspiracy, bank fraud and securities fraud he faces. His Feb. 2 trial date may be postponed.



fhb new year

The year in American culture

By ELIZABETH LARGE
THE BALTIMORE SUN

Call them 2003's lifestyle newsmakers. Not President Bush, but Dr. Atkins. Not Wall Street, but wet basements. Not aquaporins, but picture phones.

These are the people, places and things that—for better or worse—caught our attention this past year. They were emblematic of the widely differing subjects that fall under the catch-all “lifestyle”: fashion, interior design, relationships, health, fitness, food and nutrition.

We don't pretend this is the year-ending list to end all year-enders. Forgive us if we've left out your favorite newsmaker, but all we can say is: Wait until next year.

The People

Dr. Robert Atkins. The diet guru and best-selling author died this April from a fall at age 72, having finally gained respectability for his radical weight-loss plan. His diet can be summed up simply: protein and fats are good, carbohydrates are bad—at least as far as shedding pounds goes.

Martha Stewart. In spite of her legal woes, her furniture line for Bernhardt, in retail showrooms

this spring, was a phenomenal success. She still symbolizes a gracious lifestyle for millions of Americans, and Barbara Walters named her one of 2003's ten most fascinating people.

Fat kids. Because 20 to 30 percent of American children are now obese or likely to become so, the American Academy of Pediatrics issued its first recommendation on the problem, that doctors should check their young patients' body-mass index annually. Two weeks ago the first prescription pill was approved to help teens fight obesity.

Arnold Schwarzenegger. The first former chairman of the President's Council on Physical Fitness to be elected governor of a state. He couldn't have done it without wife and Kennedy family member Maria.

Trista and Ryan. Love in America, 2003-style. “The Bachelorette” couple got to know each other in six weeks in front of cameras. ABC paid for their million-dollar wedding—and broadcast it, of course.

“Queer Eye for the Straight Guy” cast. The Fab Five's makeovers in fashion, interior design, food, grooming and

culture made the term “metrosexual” part of mainstream America's vocabulary. Critics dubbed Bravo's surprise hit the most watchable of this season's reality shows.

Narciso Rodriguez. The Hispanic designer, who became famous for creating the late Carolyn Bessette Kennedy's wedding gown, is a favorite of celebs, but his designs are known for their quiet elegance. This year he won his second consecutive Womenswear Designer of the Year award from the Council of Fashion Designers of America.

Oprah. She became a billionaire and this year made Forbes magazine's list of the world's richest people by discussing lifestyle issues on her popular talk show. Her campaign to help orphans of South Africa's AIDS epidemic and her feud with Dave Letterman also made news this year.

Jamie Oliver. TV's “Naked Chef” has a new Food Network show, a new cookbook and a new line of T-Fal gourmet cookware. He even has a new baby. Some think the American public's fascination with Oliver and other celebrity chefs has to do with the fact that our mothers aren't teaching us to cook anymore.

Michael Jackson. The year began with ABC's documentary about the King of Pop, which fascinated and repelled the American public, and is ending with what may turn out to be the most sensational celebrity court case ever.

The Places

Friendster.com. The hot new online community where you link only with people who are friends or friends of friends. With more than 4 million members, it's the ultimate in social networking. At a time when online dating services are losing steam, Friendster is growing by leaps and bounds.

Whole Foods and Trader Joe's. The trend toward more healthful foods continues unabated. Of course we're still enjoying our Krispy Kremes and quarter pounders, but shoppers are also crowding the aisles of stores that sell organic produce and free-range chicken.

Male-Only Spas. A quarter of all spa clients are men, according to People magazine. Now men are starting to have their very own retreats.

Freedom Paradise. The new resort in Mexico, which caters to

those who are part of the national trend of people getting fat, bills itself as the first of its kind. Plus-size vacationers can have fun without worrying about how they look, and can be comfortable because of amenities such as extra-large, extra-sturdy poolside lounge chairs.

Wet basements. Twenty-eight inches of snow in February, Tropical storm Isabel in September and record precipitation for the year. Need we say more? Well, yes. After one of the worst dry spells in the history of the region, we just weren't prepared.

Wal-Mart. The new Christmas urban legend: A woman claimed she was trampled there in a stampede to buy \$29.87 DVD players. Some saw it as the ultimate example of crass commercialism, others as a great deal on DVD players made possible by underpaid Wal-Mart workers and cheap Chinese labor.

Self-scan lanes. Do-it-yourself comes to our biggest supermarkets. Shoppers love 'em or hate 'em, but self-scanning is changing the way we shop for groceries.

The Things

The mini. The year's fashion highlight. It was part of a Mod explosion, which was in turn part of a return to all things retro in fashion and home. Whether rising hemlines had any connection to the war, as history suggests, seems unlikely.

SARS. Severe acute respiratory syndrome didn't officially exist in March; by May it made the covers of Newsweek and Time. The flu-like illness caused relatively few deaths worldwide given the panic it engendered — there were 8,098 cases, including 774 deaths. This year's virulent flu strains will probably affect more Americans.

Gay marriage. Supported by Massachusetts' highest court in 2003, a public commitment to lifelong union has become a family-values hot button for conservatives.

Duct tape. Use it for homeland defense, hurricanes and even fashion accessories. Each year Americans buy about \$300 million worth, USA Today reported, until this year when production quintupled. You never can predict what items will become trendy.

Trans-fat. Known as the “stealth fat,” it's bad for your heart and just about impossible to avoid. Every junk food you love seems to contain it. And because it's manmade—found mostly in hydrogenated fats—natural food advocates are particularly alarmed.

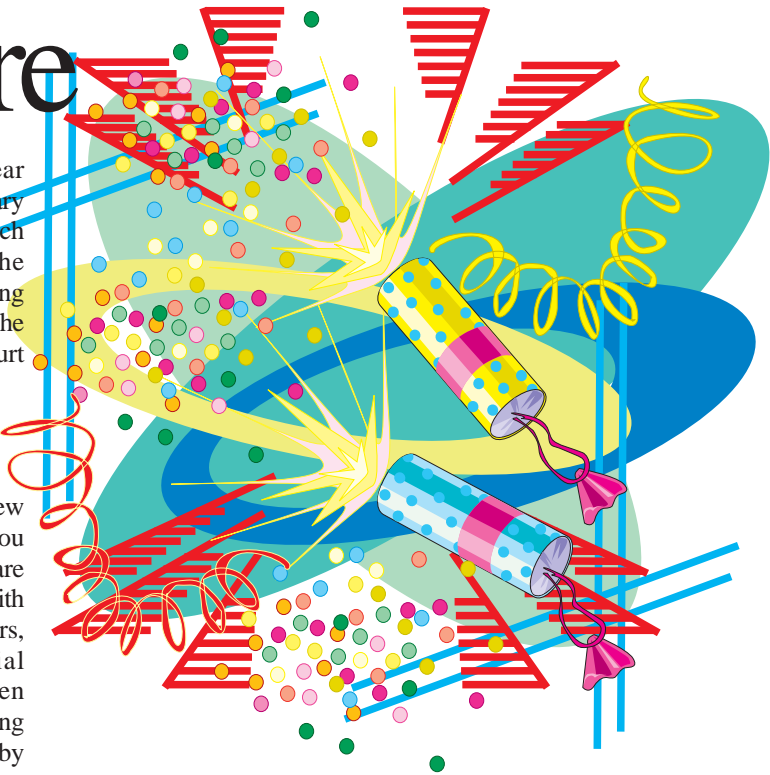
Cell phones with cameras. This year digital picture phones took off—and raised technology's latest privacy issues. You can discreetly e-mail the image anywhere to another picture phone user without the subject's knowing.

Low-carb foods. Michelob Ultra low-carb beer, Russell Stover low-carb candies, Hardee's lettuce-wrapped Thickburger and pork rinds are the latest weapons in the battle of the bulge—all the result, of course, of 2003's high-profile low-carb diets such as South Beach and Atkins.

Father-daughter relationships. Network TV shows “Alias,” “Karen Sisco,” “8 Simple Rules,” “The O.C.,” and “24” made them big. The most interesting are the first two, which show daughters can be both strong women and daddy's girls.

Boot camp. The war mentality extends even to getting in shape. Military-inspired fitness and weight-loss programs could be found in gyms all over the United States this year.

Virtual colonoscopy. Medical technology marches on. The test is noninvasive, is done without sedation, requires less disruptive preparation, and is less expensive than a traditional colonoscopy. It may become the procedure of choice for mass screening, saving about 50,000 lives lost to colon cancer each year.



tribune new year

Life & Style

Publishers promoting books with razzle-dazzle

By **RENEE TAWA**
LOS ANGELES TIMES

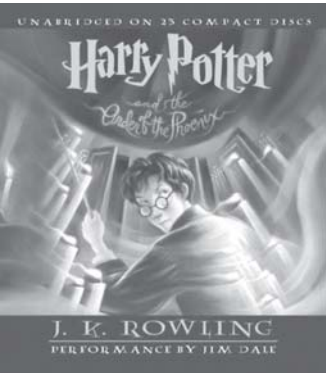
Meet Stephen King! Put your beagle on the cover of a best-selling book! Win \$4,000 (and a free paperback)!

Ah, the gentle art of book-ish persuasion. ... This was a year in which the publishing industry kept its literati tendencies in check and infused a Hollywood-style razzle-dazzle into contests and other promotions intended to nudge books into at least a glimmer of the popular culture spotlight. With book sales down from last year, publishers are being forced to abandon their high-brow position above the fray and dive right in with movies, TV and other competing forms of popular culture.

"Publishing for so many years was viewed as a fussy gentleman's business, as an academic corner," said Jacqueline Deval, publisher of Hearst Books and author of this year's "Publicize Your Book" (Perigree). "That hasn't completely gone away, but it's certainly attenuated. Publishers are becoming more slick and savvy on reaching potential audiences."

The hype doesn't take the shine off books, doesn't diminish the importance of literature in our culture, she said. "It's a mistake to treat books as precious things, as part of that rarefied academic realm of the world. That's the kind of thinking that makes books feel inaccessible."

Who says new books aren't fun in a movie premiere kind of way? Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton, D-N.Y., promoted her memoir, "Living History" (Simon & Schuster), on a Barbara Walters TV special this year. In November, Madonna talked up her second



children's book, "Mr. Peabody's Apples" (Callaway), on "Late Show With David Letterman."

There also were troubling signs that a book alone, minus the celebrity, isn't sexy enough to turn a consumer's head. In June, after Oprah Winfrey featured John Steinbeck's "East of Eden" on her show, for instance, Penguin released a new edition of the classic with this plug dominating the cover: "The book that brought Oprah's Book Club back."

Even publishers with sure-fire hits on their hands tried to come up with new ways to cannonball their books into the public consciousness.

In June, a moving billboard on the Sunset Strip in Hollywood and an electronic sign on Times Square in New York were timed to mark the exact moment that "Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix" (Scholastic) was released. It's impossible to say whether the marketing of J.K. Rowling's latest added to the novel's star power, but it didn't hurt—and more than 11 million copies have been sold in the United States.

Largely, though, big-splash publicity campaigns didn't pay off. In the first 10 months of the year, for instance, sales of adult hardcover books were down 5.8 percent, to \$965 million, compared to the same period last year, according to the New York-based Association of American Publishers.

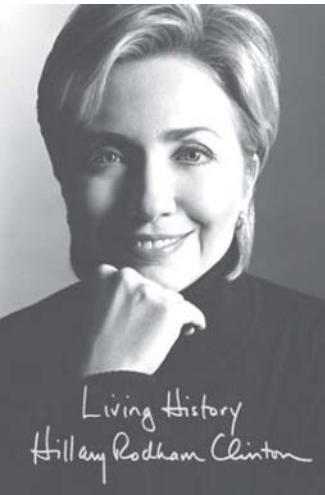
In this uneven economy, consumers consider new books to be luxury items, noted Robert Baensch, director of New York University's Center for Publishing. (According to the latest study by R.R. Bowker, which tracks U.S. publishing statistics, the average retail price of hardcovers in 2002 was \$25.06 for fiction and \$28.60 for nonfiction.)

As a result, major publishers are forced to think globally, Baensch said. "The big guys are taking the lead of saying, 'I'm not just publishing a book. I can have a miniseries (tie-in) on TV, a mega-event with movies, plastic figures at McDonald's or Burger King, and the fluffy toys at Toys R Us.'"

In the past few years, the industry's expansion has perpetuated the frenzy. Last year, U.S. publishers released 150,000 new books, up 5.86 percent, according to the Bowker study. The number of new publishers on the scene: 10,305.

Publishers are taking no chances with even brand-name authors, designing marketing campaigns to build and sustain buzz.

In a contest promoting the latest volume in "The Dark Tower," the series of novels by Stephen King, Simon & Schuster and Penguin invited readers to submit videotapes dramatizing an excerpt from one of the books. The winner will meet King in New York next year—travel expenses are not included—have one photograph taken with him and



can ask "one or two questions."

Dan Brown's colossal best seller "The Da Vinci Code" (Doubleday) already is on its second contest since its publication in March. In the first one, participants worldwide had to solve a complicated puzzle based on the book's plot. Brown will name a character in his next novel after the winner. The second contest is offering a three-night stay in Paris. "The Da Vinci Code" is one of the runaway hits of the year, with more than 5 million copies in print.

Books with lower profiles got into the game too. The winner of an online sweepstakes for "This Book Will Change Your Life" (Plume) by Ben Carey and Henrik Delehag will receive \$4,000 and a copy of the book.

In time for the holidays, DK Publishing is offering to put readers' snapshots on the cover of "America 24/7," a photography book put together by the team behind "A Day in the Life of America." Submit a digital photo to a DK Publishing Web page, and the publisher will send "America 24/7" with a custom jacket for about \$6 extra.

Twenty percent of the book's buyers have ordered the custom covers, a spokeswoman said, and 30 percent of the submitted photographs are of pets. The book has a first printing of 500,000 copies.

DK Publishing calls the offer "the first mass-customization of a best-selling book."

There was a time in this country when books took off without mass marketing, pointed out Jeffrey D. Groves, an English professor at Harvey Mudd College in Claremont, Calif. Harriet Beecher

Stowe's "Uncle Tom's Cabin," published in 1852, sold more than 500,000 copies within five years. And that was before books were advertised in magazines such as Harper's and the Atlantic Monthly in the mid-19th century and before writers such as Mark Twain traveled on book tours, Groves said.

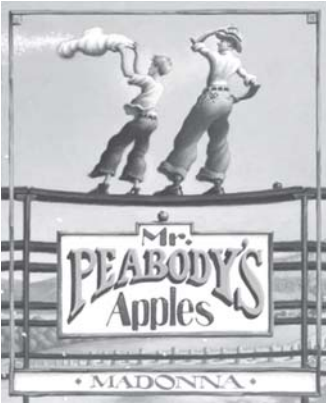
Maybe it's a quaint notion to think that readers still make a point to wander into stores and, by serendipity or with a bookseller's help, stumble upon a book that helps define who they are, that opens up their world.

In her new book of essays, "Thank You for Not Reading" (Dalkey Archive), Dubravka Ugresic writes that the outlook is bleak for literary writers. In the overcrowded marketplace, "the concept of literature is disappearing, and its place is increasingly being taken by books." She writes about the U.S. market: "The individual voice is increasingly rare. Every voice, every text is slotted into the market niche of the moment, the buzzword of the moment, the codes of the market."

But not everyone thinks the outlook is so bleak. The right book still can sell without a monster advertising campaign, said Eric Kampmann, president of Midpoint Trade Books in Kansas, a sales and distribution company for more than 150 independent publishers.

Audrey Niffenegger's "The Time Traveler's Wife," for example, took off even before San Francisco-based publisher MacAdam/Cage launched a big advertising campaign.

"A small publisher, like anyone else, is susceptible to a windfall," Kampmann said. "That keeps motivating them and gives them hope that they'll come across the book that'll become the next 'Harry Potter.'"



jet new year

Year sees not-so-proud moments in Hollywood

By PATRICK GOLDSTEIN
LOS ANGELES TIMES

There were more substantial embarrassments as well. And when it came to bad press, how about the 5,791 stories devoted to the ins and outs of Ben and J.Lo's nonwedding, which by my rough estimate represented about 5,000 more stories than were written about the war on terrorism or the ballooning federal budget deficit.

But, hey, in Hollywood everybody has his priorities straight. Perhaps that's why staffers at the Fox Cable Network were threatened with criminal charges last month—not because they were selling pirated DVDs but because

someone was disseminating an e-mail that listed the take-home pay of everybody who worked in their division. Here's our annual look at some of the year's dubious achievements and other strange-but-true moments:

■ Imagine what would've happened if he'd thought he was an agent for Endeavor: Awaiting trial for murder after killing filmmaker Jawed Wassel, cutting up his body and packing the parts in boxes, producer Nathan Chandler Powell told Newsday that he killed Wassel because he suffered from post-Sept. 11 traumatic stress and "I suspected he was an agent for the Taliban."

■ Maybe he hasn't looked at his recent re-views: Asked what he thought of Arnold Schwarzenegger's election as governor of California, Ben Affleck told Entertainment Weekly: "I suppose it means that if I did run for office, no one could say I was the worst actor ever to be elected."

■ If only Rush Limbaugh had this good an explanation: When Courtney Love was taken by police to a hospital for a suspected drug overdose after breaking windows in an attempt to enter her boyfriend's Beverly Hills home, her publicist explained the incident by saying that Love had taken a dose of prescription medication "she thought was 2 milligrams and turned out to be 20, became alarmed and went to a hospital, where she spent several hours reading a biography of Marlon Brando."

■ And the video of his heart bypass was a lot funnier than "Gigli": The day after Vincent Gallo told Cannes Film Festival reporters that he wasn't sorry about anything he had said about the negative critical reaction to his film "Brown Bunny," except for putting a curse on Roger Ebert's colon, Ebert responded: "When I had my last colonoscopy, they let me watch it on a little TV and it was far more entertaining than 'Brown Bunny.'"

■ Whoops, we thought there was at least one Hollywood movie in production that wasn't based on a comic book: This summer Premiere magazine ran a correction saying: "In our Power List, we stated that producer Lorenzo di Bonaventura's upcoming project, 'Constantine,' is based on the life of the Roman emperor. It is, in fact, based on the DC Comics comic-book character, John Constantine."



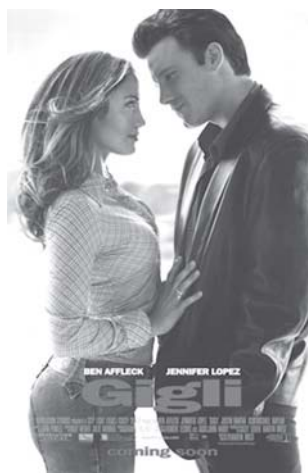
Liza Minnelli and her husband, producer David Gest, during happier times.

■ And that was before she tied me up and made me watch the Paris Hilton sex tape: In a \$10 million divorce-court filing against Liza Minnelli this fall, producer David Gest called himself "a victim of domestic violence," citing an incident in which he says Minnelli drank a bottle of vodka before "berating him and beating him about the head and face with her fists without relenting."

■ We're guessing it wasn't one of Dennis Quaid's old fishing hats: After seeing a scene from "In the Cut" in which Meg Ryan discovers her half-sister's

head in a bag at the sister's apartment, one scribe at a Toronto Film Festival news conference asked the actress, "Meg, when you held the bag with the severed head, what was actually in the bag?"

■ But I did find myself listening to a lot of Liza Minnelli records: Responding to charges in the New York Post that he missed a day of shooting the 20th Century Fox film "X2" after being incapacitated by some sort of medication, director Bryan Singer told Entertainment Weekly: "I did not take a drug that made me woozy and incapable of working."



■ You mean, does Sept. 11 compare to something really important, like my opening-weekend box office?: When asked by Rolling Stone if the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks had an effect on him, Quentin Tarantino responded: "9/11 didn't affect me, because there's, like, a Hong Kong movie (where) they work in a whole big thing where they blow up a giant skyscraper. ... And the shot almost is a semi-duplicate shot of 9/11. I actually enjoyed inviting people over to watch the movie and not telling them about it."

■ Maybe this is why we don't look as good as Faye Dunaway: When a waiter offered her a choice of cuisine at Clive Davis' Grammy bash, Dunaway removed a digital food scale from her purse and weighed each portion, saying she was on a diet that allowed only 4 ounces of protein a day. The man sitting next to her said she perused his plate, saying, "I'll trade you my broccoli for a tomato."

■ Or maybe you should check the guest room at Vincent Gallo's house: When Sean Connery was asked at the premiere of "The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen" if he knew the whereabouts of the film's director, Stephen Norrington, with whom he'd been feuding, the legendary actor responded, "Have you checked the local asylum?"

■ Personally, we got a little tingle just thinking about the poster: Shopping a feature film called "Ashes" that involves a woman's "comic but meaningful" quest for joy and spiritual fulfillment, Goldie Hawn explained to Variety: "It's like an orgasm. You never know when it's going to come, but it's always exciting."

saipan ice
new year

Best of '03 rises above cheap pop stunts

By ROBERT HILBURN
LOS ANGELES TIMES

The record industry keeps pointing to downloading and piracy as the reasons it is in crisis, but some blame should also go to the way companies spend more time and money marketing mediocre talents than finding visionary ones.

The strategy in mainstream pop for years now has been to hire hotshot producers who tailor music to the demands of contemporary radio. And the marketing is easier if the producer can work with TV celebrities, such as the "American Idol" crowd and Hilary Duff, or with self-promotion machines such as Britney Spears and Christina Aguilera.

Nothing symbolized this marketing calculation more than Spears kissing Madonna at the MTV Video Music Awards in August. You could imagine the cheering at Jive Records, Spears' label, as they pictured all the publicity that was sure to follow.

The moment was as artificial as Spears' music, and you couldn't help but cheer yourself this month when the new album by Alicia Keys, a young artist with restraint and talent, outsold Spears in their first weeks in the stores. Kiss that, Britney.

In this disheartening musical climate, it's nothing less than miraculous that albums as thrilling as the White Stripes' "Elephant" and OutKast's "Speakerboxxx/The Love Below" could not only sell more

than a million copies each but also get Grammy nominations for album of the year.

The two works are so far ahead of everything else in 2003 that it is tempting to declare them the three best albums of the year, a move that is all the more reasonable because "Speakerboxxx/The Love Below" is really two solo albums.

"Speakerboxxx," the album by OutKast's Big Boi, is traditional OutKast, an exuberant, funk-driven work in the grand, eccentric tradition of James Brown, George Clinton and Prince. Andre 3000's "The Love Below" mixes OutKast daring with R&B, jazz and rock influences in a set of loosely autobiographical songs about having trouble

finding, or believing in, a lasting relationship.

It's an extraordinary CD, but "Elephant" is even more commanding—my choice for album of the year.

Reflecting the classic songwriting values and intelligence of earlier rock eras, the CD celebrates rock's explosiveness and acknowledges music's ability to be tender and even humorous. The album's "Seven Nation Army" was the record of the year at college and alt-rock radio.

At a time when many in the music business worry that youngsters are no longer interested in albums, just singles, the White Stripes and OutKast gave us music so invigorating that you didn't want to miss a minute.

Curious year in films offers the good, the bad

By **DEBORAH HORNBLow**
THE HARTFORD COURANT

It's the end of another year in motion-picture history, and a curious one it was.

The year's big releases proved a mixed lot. Some of the veterans demonstrated their reliability and managed to surpass themselves with such pictures as Peter Jackson's "The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King," Clint Eastwood's "Mystic River," Nancy Meyers' "Something's Gotta Give," Ron Howard's "The Missing," the Tom Cruise action picture "The Last Samurai" and the Peter Weir/Russell Crowe/Paul Bettany historical drama "Master and Commander."

But those successes sometimes seemed outnumbered by the disappointments of other big-studio, big-star efforts, including the catastrophic "Benifer" vanity project "Gigli"; Kevin Costner's lumbering, self-serious cowboy saga "Open Range"; Angelina Jolie's "Lara Croft Tomb Raider: The Cradle of Life"; the stalling "Charlie's Angels: Full Throttle"; Reese Witherspoon's

"Legally Blonde 2: Red, White and Blonde"; and Mike Myers' "The Cat in the Hat."

Indies and imports delivered some thrilling surprises. Katia Lund and Fernando Meirelles' "City of God" was heralded as one of the best-crafted films of the year. Vladimir Michalek's "Autumn Spring" ("Babi Leto"), with the great Vlastimil Brodsky, is a delight. And Alan Rudolph's "The Secret Lives of Dentists" is a darkly funny, unsentimental exploration of adultery, marriage and family.

Surprises broke through with the ease of last year's "My Big Fat Greek Wedding." Indie director Terry Zwigoff made a courageous leap with the outrageous "Bad Santa." Johnny Depp could not make a misstep with his doubleheader as the swishy pirate in "Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl," a deliciously unpretentious picture, and the swashbuckling "Once Upon a Time in Mexico." Also bubbling to the top of the heap were Sofia Coppola's original if somewhat sketchy comedy "Lost in Translation" with the great Bill Murray,

kidneys. The outstanding supporting cast includes Sophie Okonedo and Zlatko Buric and is disrupted only by the awkward presence of "Amelie"'s Audrey Tautou.

The Secret Lives of Dentists

Alan Rudolph's indie, based on Jane Smiley's novella "The Age of Grief," is a darkly comic, inventively structured exploration of marriage, adultery and the individual sacrifices required of family. Campbell Scott and Hope Davis play the married dentists whose union is tested. Dennis Leary is the caustic, cynical patient who becomes the husband's alter ego.

Mystic River

Clint Eastwood's workmanlike direction of Dennis Lehane's novel about the corrosive effects of violence drew some of the year's greatest performances. Sean Penn, Tim Robbins and Kevin Bacon are all superb (and a transfigured Robbins astonishes) as three men whose childhood friendship was marred by violence and whose present lives in a lower-class Boston neighborhood are tainted by it again. Marcia Gay Harden and Laura Linney are memorable in supporting roles.

Triplets of Belleville

There are those who will insist on "Finding Nemo" for the best animated film of the year, but it is too handily trumped by this subversive, funny French original. Sylvain Chomet's caper about a kidnapped Tour de France cyclist and his rescuers is an excuse for exquisitely funny line drawings of cyclist's muscle-bound physiques, Gallic noses, fat Americans, passing trains, tall skinny steamships, square-shouldered henchmen, and a well-observed ever-loyal pooch who barks at trains, waddles down stairs and dreams of riding in a car with his jowls flapping in the wind. Pure delight.

Something's Gotta Give

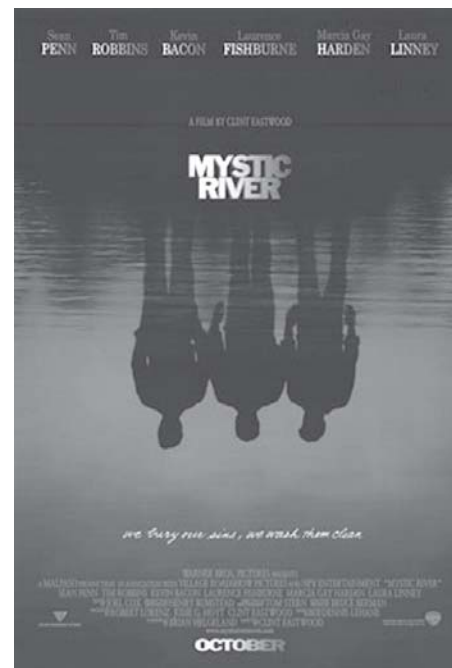
Nancy Meyers' romantic comedy starring Diane Keaton and Jack Nicholson reinvigorates the genre with a smart, knowing and wise look at love and lust among the more-than-middle-aged set. Great script, performances



(except for Keanu Reeves' unconvincing cardiologist) and direction make this a terrific heart attack.

In America

Director Jim Sheridan films the story of an Irish family that moves to New York in an attempt to put behind them a great grief. The script, co-written by two of the director's daughters, is based on the Sheridan family's own history. Sentimental in parts, tinged by bits of mystical hocus-pocus, the film nevertheless transcends both weaknesses to tell a powerful story of a family lost and found.



Bad Santa

Terry Zwigoff's scabrously funny, wildly profane, adults-only Christmas comedy was the most original, fearless, politically incorrect blast of fresh air in American cinema all year. Billy Bob Thornton deserves an Oscar for his no-holds-barred portrayal of a felonious, alcoholic, chain-smoking mall Santa.

Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King

New Zealand director Peter Jackson's history-making film cycle brought much light and originality to the cineplex in a time of some darkness. This finale is a glorious coda replete with expert cinematic storytelling, groundbreaking use of digital effects, indelible performances and the last chapters of J.R.R. Tolkien's great yarn about an odd fellowship of hobbits, wizards, elves, dwarfs and humans who defy the odds to save the world from evil.

House of Fools

Russian writer/director Andrei Konchalovsky's brilliant anti-war film is set at a mental hospital besieged by Chechen rebels. Among the hospital patients is a young woman who escapes reality by fantasizing about Canadian pop singer Bryan Adams. The film is a

timeless and unforgettable argument against the insanity of war.

Babi Leto (Autumn Spring)

Vlastimil Brodsky gives the crowning performance of a lifetime as Fanda, a mischievous octogenarian who refuses to grow up. Accompanied by his buddy, Ada, the two poor, former opera chorusters entertain themselves with a series of mild pranks, posing as wealthy real-estate buyers, train inspectors and television producers to the exasperation of Fanda's wife. Director Vladimir Michalek sensitively films what happens when Fanda is compelled to act his age.

Dirty Pretty Things

Stephen Frears returned to his favorite subject, the London of immigrants and illegals, in this masterfully gritty, suspenseful tale of a black market in human organs. Chiwetel Ejiofor gives a breakout performance as Okwe, the Nigerian doctor who sought asylum in London and now drives a taxi and works the night shift at the seedy Baltic Hotel. It is there that he and some of his friends become embroiled in the traffic of

wallace

Welcome this new year with goals you can reach

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN



Dear Abby

DEAR READERS: Rise and shine, and welcome to the New Year! This is our chance for a new beginning, the day we discard destructive habits for healthy new ones. With that in mind, I'm printing Dear Abby's oft-requested list of New Year's resolutions—adapted by my mother from the original credo of Al-Anon.

JUST FOR TODAY, I will live through this day only. I will not brood about

yesterday or obsess about tomorrow. I will not set far-reaching goals or try to overcome all my problems at once. I know that I can do something for 24 hours that would overwhelm me if I had to keep it up for a lifetime.

JUST FOR TODAY, I will be happy. I will not dwell on thoughts that depress me. If my mind fills with clouds, I will chase them away and fill it with sunshine.

JUST FOR TODAY, I will accept what is. I will face reality. I will correct those things I can correct and accept those I cannot.

JUST FOR TODAY, I will improve my mind. I will read something that requires effort, thought and concentration. I will not be a mental loafer.

JUST FOR TODAY, I will make a conscious effort to be agreeable. I will be kind and courteous to those who cross my path, and I will not speak ill of others. I'll improve my appearance, speak softly, and not interrupt when someone else is talking. Just for today, I'll refrain from improving anybody but myself.

JUST FOR TODAY, I will do something positive to improve my health. If I'm a smoker, I'll quit. If I'm overweight, I'll eat healthily—if only for today. And just for today, I'll get off the couch and take a brisk walk, even if it's only around the block.

JUST FOR TODAY, I will gather the courage to do what is right and take responsibility for my own actions.

And now, Dear Readers, I would like to share an item that was sent to me last year, too late to print for New Year's. It was sent by a reader, I.J. Bhatia, who lives in New Delhi, India, with the following message:

DEAR ABBY: Every year we make New Year's resolutions—only to break them. This year no resolutions, only some guidelines. The Holy Vedas say, "Man has subjected himself to thousands of self-inflicted bondages. Wisdom comes to a man who lives according to the true eternal laws of nature." The following Prayer of Saint Francis contains a powerful message:

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace;
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
Where there is sadness, joy.
O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;
To be understood as to understand;
To be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive;
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
It is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

May we find peace and joy in this new year.

To one and all, a happy, healthy 2004!—Love, ABBY

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

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Networks staking a claim to mindless mediocrity

By DIANE WERTS
NEWSDAY

As the networks continued to obsess this year over the short-term ratings gains of cheesy reality shows—even TV "news" magazines now qualify with such celeb fixations as Michael Jackson—they also accelerated their longer-term slide into mediocrity of imagination.

Even if it doesn't bite them today or tomorrow where it hurts (presumably the wallet), the broadcast titans seem to be ceding creative leadership in a way that ultimately dissolves any viewership advantage to which they continue to cling. How long can it be until viewers completely abandon the notion of the networks as the "default" choice to check what's worth watching each night? What's the difference when ABC looks like TLC looks like Fox looks like Spike?

In considering which programs meant the most to me and the medium this season, I had to work hard to come up with one network effort to comfortably include in my top 10. One! The incisive days of "Homicide," "Roseanne" and "Nothing Sacred" seem oh-so-far behind us now, never mind the all-out breakthroughs of an "All in the Family" or "Hill Street Blues." We aren't even back to the '60s, with the loopy originality of "The Addams Family" or "Green Acres." Can you imagine giddily revisiting "Two and a Half Men" 40 years from now? Thank goodness for cable.

Soldier's Girl (Showtime). The networks don't know what TV movies are anymore. But on premium cable (and increasingly basic cable), they're just theatricals premiered on a small screen. Director Frank Pierson's heart-wrenchingly humane view of a transgendered woman and the unsophisticated soldier who despite all reason can't help

loving her was a small masterpiece of the sort we now revere from the movies of the 1970s. (See IFC's "A Decade Under the Influence.") Pierson's fact-based material radiated compassion even for its killers, riven by emotions they're unequipped to fathom. TV was made for this kind of intimate character study, of ordinary people, something it now delivers all too seldom.

The Office (BBC America). Talk about intimate. This eavesdropping "mockumentary" series traces the mundane inanities of office work to reveal the little power trips and ego tugs of war with which we occupy ourselves as modern business duties become utterly mindless. The staff at Wortham Hogg consists of literal paper shufflers, distributing paper products when they're not screwing with each other's heads and playing politics. With his bad-joke glad-handing and blithe betrayals, Ricky Gervais' finely observed "sleazy boss" is a character for the ages.

Playmakers (ESPN). Universal truths of the workplace are revealed here, too, even as this drama is populated by high-ticket football players, coaches and hangers-on. Gutsy isn't the word for John Eisendrath's unsparing portrayal of the darkness and desperation inherent in their lives' insecurities. Detailed in graphic terms of drugs, violence and corporate backstabbing, the core statements resonate down to our own commonplace struggles to maintain whatever status we've been able to scrape together. If the NFL runs this one off the air, they haven't seen the forest for the trees.

South Park (Comedy Central). Still the most original and persuasive social satire on the tube. From kids toilet-papering a neighbor's house to such cul-



South Park

tural currents as anti-war protest, senior power, ostracizing smokers and elevating "metrosexuals," creators Trey Parker and Matt Stone shy away from nothing and observe everything with keen (if sometimes crude) insight. They're especially sharp (and vicious) in lampooning celebrity. Somebody sure needs to be.

The Shield (FX). Shawn Ryan's explosive police drama lost none of its heat in this second season. Moral choices and civic politics only became more complex, more raw, more personal. Ryan gets bonus points for overseeing deep-dwelling DVD sets that lay bare both his series' ethical challenges and its production processes, cementing its archival value.

Farscape (Sci Fi). Another show that's far more profound than most folks suspect. Before its run was abruptly truncated in March, the galaxy-trotting drama probed further into notions of identity, tribal ties, trust and even, by briefly visiting Earth, how aliens really might be received by our society at the dawn of the 21st century. If only viewers had looked beyond the space-age makeup to recognize the smart hearts and souls inside these extraordinarily developed characters.

Battlestar Galactica (Sci Fi).

Yes, more sci-fi. And another one that reflected us by reflecting a world forced to grapple with its past doings and future possibilities. Yet this apocalypse miniseries-pilot was no "message" slog, just a rip-roaring adventure yarn with firm moorings in the human race's continuing battle with its own overreaching impulses.

Angels in America (HBO). A brilliantly grounded first half sketched the self-consuming compromises we make to get us through the hurdles of modern life. An ethereally muddled second half threatened to dissipate the cumulative force of the first. But what a gorgeous production from Mike Nichols, what a gifted cast (Al Pacino, Meryl Streep, Justin Kirk), what a wondrous parade of language from playwright Tony Kushner, hereby preserving his Broadway triumph on film.

Freshman Diaries (Show-time). Wow, a reality show not about rivalry, scheming and general misbehavior. Docu-mentarian R.J. Cutler just turned the camera on to (and over to) varied college freshmen as they learned to navigate the sprawling University of Texas at Austin. Independently responsible for the first time, they fight to define themselves and chart a course for their futures, while suffering the intimate agonies that process encumbers. This is how lives get shaped. And we got to watch.

Arrested Development (Fox). OK, here's that network series. As TV comedy lies wasting away like Greta Garbo's Camille, along comes this jaunty, acerbic yet affectionate look at a shallow nouveau riche family. Shot cinema verite without an audience, narrated by ordinary-Opie Ron Howard, it lets us find the laughs, and the heart, for ourselves in its outrageous situations.

Pastimes

WONDERWORD By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally, even backward. Find them and CIRCLE THEIR LETTERS ONLY. DO NOT CIRCLE THE WORD. The leftover letters spell the Wonderword.

PLYWOOD PRODUCTS Solution: 8 letters

L H S S T M A K E C T M R Y H
Y A L R E V O R O O D E A D O
N M I S K W O O D S E L L N M
I M D R A C S W L T N A A A E
V E I L E N O L I I H M R S P
B R N O I T A L U S N I E A T
L U G A F W A I B R N N N W F
T A R K I T E M P E R E D S L
M G M C T L L E V E L O M B U
R L A I S K S E B N E P O H S
O U C H N N D M I E D A L L H
F E E T D A U E R V R E D A F
C E D A R L T T C D A N K Y O
H A N G S P O E H K H I E E O
F R A M E R U S S E R P D R R

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Beds, Birch, Block, Board, Build, Cedar, Core, Cost, Deck, Door, Feet, Fits, Floor, Flush, Form, Frame, Glue, Grade, Grains, Hammer, Hangs, Hard, Home, Inlay, Insulation, Laminates, Last, Lattice, Layer, Level, Lumber, Make, Marine, Material, Melamine, Millwork, Mold, Nails, Overlay, Panel, Pine, Plank, Pressure, Roof, Sand, Saws, Sell, Shop, Sliding, Solid, Tempered, Thick, Thin, Tree, Trim, Veneers, Vinyl, Walls, Walnut. Yesterday's Answer: Passive
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CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Greek cross
4 Navigator's stack
8 Mexican money
12 Larry King's employer
13 Touch
14 Saharan
15 Circus clown's ride
17 Incense
18 "Go, team!"
19 Summery shades
21 Gardening tool
24 Barnyard comment
25 Bale stuff
26 The word?
28 "— Got Mail"
32 Terrible guy?
34 Hiatus
36 Recognize
37 Graf rival
39 Lad's lid
41 — -de-France
42 Shooter's ammo

44 Arthur Murray's lessons
46 Pairs participants
50 Old Olds
51 Llama territory
52 Cosmos
56 — even keel (stable)
57 Tiresome sort
58 Enthusiast
59 Start of a famous quote
60 The third man
61 33-Down's domain

DOWN

1 Horned Frogs' sch.
2 Political writer
3 Big name in tires
4 Willful destruction
5 Rudimentary lesson
6 Tabloid writing
7 Watt's power
8 Shared in the experience
9 Ontario neighbor
10 Ledge
11 Praiseful poetry
16 Cornfield call
20 Sauce source
21 Anything but that
22 Dance party
23 Shlep
27 Doorway accessory
29 Mythical creatures
30 Muskrat's kin
31 Lambs' dams
33 Trident bearer
35 Launch site
38 Witness
40 Wizard of Oz, aka Professor —
43 Island off Venezuela
45 Born
46 Dick and Jane's dog
47 Casino pastime
48 Desert denizen
49 Nose-in-the-air type
53 Anger
54 Seek restitution
55 Timetable abbr.

Solution time: 25 mins.

Y A R D E R I K P O O L
E R E M O T E L U R E
L E A P O T P O U R R I
P A R K A I N N
I T L L E G R E T
P A N T H E O N E U R O
A L E S A G O S N I P
N E W S P O T T A G E S
G E T U P N E A R
B R A T E S T Y
P A N T O M I M E E R A
O V A L E V I L P E R
D E N Y S E X Y T E N

Yesterday's answer 1-1

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY
Verne Troyer, Don Novello, Embeth Davidtz, Olivia Williams

HAPPY BIRTHDAY: You are dependable, sensible and romantic and this year you will put these characteristics to good work. This is a year of expansion in all areas of your life. Your contributions will be well received and your reputation will grow. Your numbers are 5, 12, 17, 26, 35, 44

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ARIES (March 21-April 19)
You must be willing to listen to others this year to make the most of the opportunities that surround you. Work on being more patient and careful. ★★



TAURUS (April 20-May 20)
Move forward with wisdom to become less stubborn. Your inability to accept change has been a downfall in the past. Don't allow it to continue. ★★



GEMINI (May 21-June 20)
To start the year off on the right foot, stop talking so much and put your versatility to work for you. Think first and then take action. Don't stretch the truth even if it does make for a better story. ★★



CANCER (June 21-July 22)
You have a great year ahead, so curb your mood swings. Sharing is another one of the problems that you face. It's not so hard — just do it. ★★



LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)
For those of you who want to take an honest look at yourself, consider curbing your insatiable urge to be so generous this year with your belongings and cash. Be fair and remember that charity begins at home. ★★



VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)
This may be the year to resolve your critical outlook and stop judging yourself and everyone around you. Start viewing your cup as half full, not half empty. ★★



LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)
Stop procrastinating and concentrate on the facts if you really want to get somewhere this year. How you handle yourself during the first half of the year will determine the outcome during the last quarter. ★★



SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)
Redirect your energy into being successful instead of vengeful. This isn't the year to waste time settling old scores. Be progressive and creative, looking toward the future. ★★



SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)
You must eliminate your desire to exaggerate. Stop being evasive with the ones you love. Curb your need to take risks with the family savings. Responsibility will be the key to moving forward. ★★



CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)
Concentrate on giving more of yourself emotionally. Learn to share, play and enjoy leisure time with the ones you love. You should be able to make large profits this year. ★★



AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)
It's time to show a little compassion if you want to make progress in your life. Resolve to curb your headstrong temperament and open your arms to friendship and love. ★★

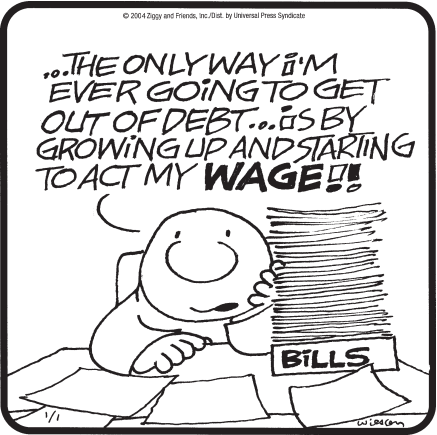


PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)
Start the year off with a bang by working with creative components that you have a natural affinity for. Being practical is not your thing, but incorporate a little restraint into what you pursue. ★★

BIRTHDAY BABY: You are bright, articulate and very much in control. You are ambitious and want to make a difference. You are dedicated and willing to do whatever is necessary to benefit mankind.

(Need advice? Check out Eugenia on the Web at www.astroadvice.com or www.eugenialast.com.)

Ziggy®



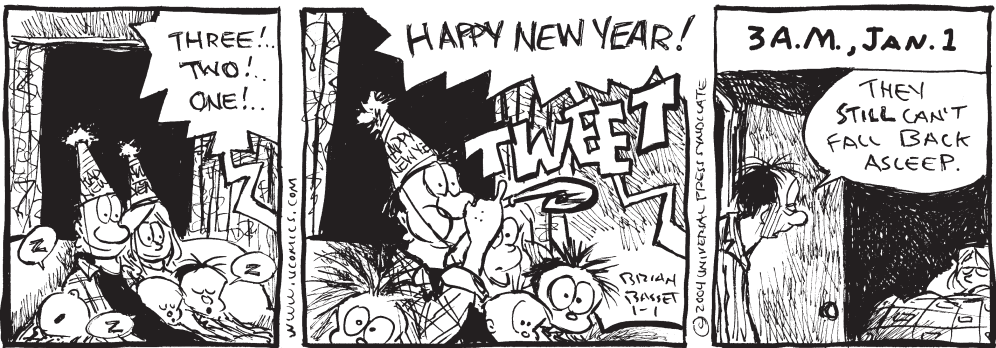
Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Watterson



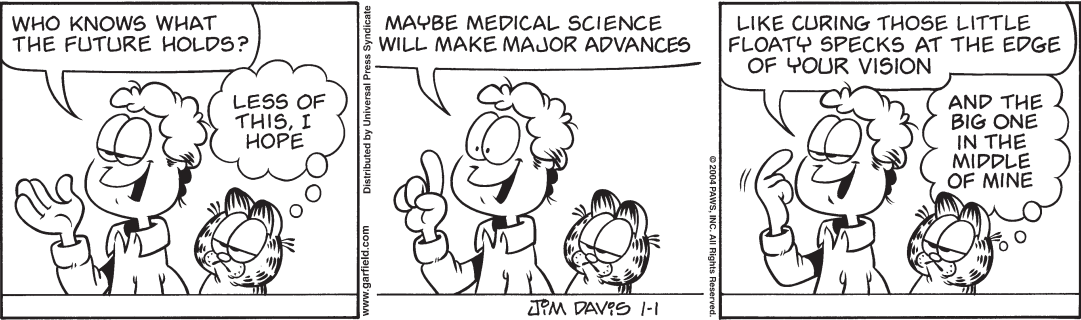
Adam@home

By Brian Basset



Garfield®

by Jim Davis



The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy





MBL Standings		
Verizon	1	0
Joeten	1	0
NMC Proa	1	1
Preparation Y	1	1
C.K. Legends	0	2



SPORTS BRIEFS



Tan Holdings Corporation



American League				
East Division				
Team	W	L	Pct	GB
y- NY Yankees	99	58	.631	-
Boston	91	66	.580	8
Toronto	73	84	.465	26
Baltimore	67	90	.427	32
Tampa Bay	54	103	.344	45
Central Division				
y- Minnesota	90	66	.577	-
Chicago Sox	79	78	.503	11.5
Cleveland	70	87	.446	20.5
Kansas City	61	96	.389	29.5
Detroit	54	102	.346	36
West Division				
x- Oakland	99	57	.635	-
Anaheim	96	61	.611	3.5
Seattle	90	66	.577	9
Texas	71	86	.452	28.5

National League				
East Division				
y- Atlanta	97	58	.626	-
Montreal	79	78	.503	19
Philadelphia	79	78	.503	19
Florida	76	81	.484	22
NY Mets	74	82	.474	23.5
Central Division				
y- St. Louis	93	64	.592	-
Houston	83	75	.525	10.5
Cincinnati	76	81	.484	17
Pittsburgh	70	87	.446	23
Chicago Cubs	65	92	.414	28
Milwaukee	55	102	.350	38
West Division				
Arizona	94	63	.599	-
San Francisco	90	66	.577	3.5
Los Angeles	88	68	.564	5.5
Colorado	72	84	.462	21.5
San Diego	65	91	.417	28.5
y-clinched division title				
x-clinched playoff spot				

Rotary Standings		
Tanapag Warriors	7	0
OIAces	5	2
Dan Dan Sharks	5	3
San Vicente Suns	4	2
G-Rollers	4	4
Gualo Rai Wildcats	3	4
Kagman Cougars	2	4
Susupe Hi-5	1	4
C.K. Hoosiers	0	7

NBA STANDINGS				
EASTERN CONFERENCE				
Atlantic Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Orlando	1	0	1.000	—
Boston	0	0	.000	1/2
Miami	0	0	.000	1/2
New Jersey	0	0	.000	1/2
New York	0	0	.000	1/2
Washington	0	0	.000	1/2
Philadelphia	0	1	.000	1
Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Atlanta	0	0	.000	—
Chicago	0	0	.000	—
Cleveland	0	0	.000	—
Detroit	0	0	.000	—
Indiana	0	0	.000	—
Milwaukee	0	0	.000	—
New Orleans	0	0	.000	—
Toronto	0	0	.000	—
WESTERN CONFERENCE				
Midwest Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Dallas	0	0	.000	—
Denver	0	0	.000	—
Houston	0	0	.000	—
Memphis	0	0	.000	—
Minnesota	0	0	.000	—
San Antonio	0	0	.000	—
Utah	0	0	.000	—
Pacific Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Golden State	0	0	.000	—
L.A. Clippers	0	0	.000	—
L.A. Lakers	0	0	.000	—
Phoenix	0	0	.000	—
Portland	0	0	.000	—
Sacramento	0	0	.000	—
Seattle	0	0	.000	—

NFL Standings						
AMERICAN CONFERENCE						
East						
Team	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	
Miami	1	0	0	1.000	49	21
New England	1	0	0	1.000	30	14
N.Y. Jets	1	0	0	1.000	37	31
Buffalo	0	1	0	.000	31	37
South						
Houston	1	0	0	1.000	19	10
Indianapolis	1	0	0	1.000	28	25
Tennessee	1	0	0	1.000	27	24
Jacksonville	0	1	0	.000	25	28
North						
Baltimore	0	1	0	.000	7	10
Cincinnati	0	1	0	.000	6	34
Cleveland	0	1	0	.000	39	40
Pittsburgh	0	1	0	.000	14	30
West						
Denver	1	0	0	1.000	23	16
Kansas City	1	0	0	1.000	40	39
Oakland	1	0	0	1.000	31	17
San Diego	1	0	0	1.000	34	6
NATIONAL CONFERENCE						
East						
Washington	1	0	0	1.000	31	23
Dallas	0	1	0	.000	10	19
N.Y. Giants	0	1	0	.000	13	16
Philadelphia	0	1	0	.000	24	27
South						
Carolina	1	0	0	1.000	10	7
New Orleans	1	0	0	1.000	26	20
Atlanta	0	1	0	.000	34	37
Tampa Bay	0	1	0	.000	20	26
North						
Chicago	1	0	0	1.000	27	23
Green Bay	1	0	0	1.000	37	34
Detroit	0	1	0	.000	21	49
Minnesota	0	1	0	.000	23	27
West						
San Francisco	1	0	0	1.000	16	13
Arizona	0	1	0	.000	23	31
Seattle	0	1	0	.000	17	31
St. Louis	0	1	0	.000	16	23



Dallas Mavericks top Clippers, 122-95
Nick Van Exel and Michael Finley had 24 points each as Dallas Mavericks remained unbeaten at home despite losing leading scorer Dirk Nowitzki to an ankle injury, beating the Los Angeles Clippers 122-95 Tuesday night. **25**

Saipan Tribune Sports

Pathway festivities to push through
With supertyphoon Pongsona gone and Saipan finally in the clear, all systems are go for this coming Saturday's Saipan Beach Pathway Christmas in the Marianas festivities to mark the landmark's completion. **27**

